10 NEW STORIES

argosy

Michael Gilbert

Ludwig Bemelmans

Paul Gallico

Victor Canning

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argosy

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SINCE the days of the Greeks, about two thousand years ago, mankind has been fighting a long and losing battle against the introduction of soap. You can see how much the lexicographer hates soap from his dictionary definition—" Compound of fatty acid with soda or potash (insoluble ss!) (*hiss! boo!*) of which the soluble kinds yield a lather used in washing (soft ss! also fig. flattery). Vb scrub or rub with s.; use s. upon oneself. (*Ugh!*)" Even fig flattery doesn't make soap palatable to him.

N.B. The Greeks must have *hated* washing; they had a special grammatical Voice, the Middle Voice, of which the example given in our book was " I wash for myself (but this is rare)." We have heard that Voice too.

The Phoenicians had soap in 600 B.C. but the formula was successfully lost, and had to be re-learnt by the Romans from the Germans six hundred years later. Pliny washed with goat's tallow and ash, or at least he put the stuff on his hair.

After that things went along quietly till the end of the sixteenth century when Elizabeth I was still only having one bath a month —and even a couple of hundred years after that Sam Johnson was stubbornly exclaiming, " I hate immersion."

Of course *now* we've really given in.

You wouldn't believe what a lot of art goes into soap manufacture. Things known as additives are added, the soap is all mixed in a utensil called a batch crutcher (because it crutches the batches) and from there it passes through a cooling roll to a chip dryer. Then comes this mysterious contrivance, the plodder.

Actually there are three plodders: the pre-plodder, the plodder itself, and the final plodder (not to mention the amalgamator, the two mills, and a vacuum box). The whole business has a stately sound, don't you agree? worthy of celebration by one of our greatest modern poets, after this fashion perhaps:—

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Soap (toilet) and soap (household)
Are both, perhaps, conveyed in the same conveyor,
(Humankind wills it so). But to what purpose?
It proceeds—moving, and partly moving—
Through the spray drying tower, the spray nozzler,
Past the cyclone dust collector, the exhaust air fan,
To the plodder.
The soap has many voices
From the glub-glub in the fabric filter socks and
The yelp in the vacuum box to
The clamour in the chip dryer.
But all ends at
The plodder.
Between the pre-plodder and the final plodder remains always
The plodder.
Sweet scent of soapcake and the drifting detergent
Whisper of foam in the basin and hiss of detergent
And the secretive lather on the flannel
All come from, all have their origin of being in
The plodder.

So there it is, comrades. The long battle is fought and lost. We are forced to acknowledge that while there's life there's soap. But we manage things better than the Greeks—the best *they* could do in the way of washing was to beat themselves with twigs.

The Greeks didn't have Argosy, either, which makes absolutely *first-class* reading in the bath. JOHN SILVER

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MADAME HELL

"I have heard your name—" he said,
"you are too beautiful to be here."

BY MICHAEL FOSTER

QUIETLY, she walked from room to room lighting candles as the dusk came on.

Her skirts whispered as she walked—the heavy, rich flounced skirts of a married gentlewoman—whispering about the ankles of an adventuress from the China Coast.

With quiet feet, she went from the drawing-room into the library, lighting candles against the dusk of time gathering in an ancient Southern house in 1864.

And as she walked with the taper in her hand, she thought of her captain who was slipping in to run the blockade tonight, before the moon would rise.

Finally, in front of the library fireplace, she blew out the taper and stood looking for a minute at the smoking wick. Then with a bitter, invisible laugh she laid the taper in the pewter tray on the mantelpiece and went out through the open doors into the garden.

It was a walled garden, and she walked down an old brick path, where the great ladies of her captain's family had walked before her, between the smoky spires of flowers in the dusk. She didn't know their names, those blue flowers that grew so tall and lovely in the garden; she knew none of the gentle arts, the gentle patter of being a lady. But they were beautiful and she loved them, the flowers.

She was angry and she wanted to smoke, but she knew she couldn't here, not in the garden; not where the servants might see her from the windows.

It always made her angry to remember her afternoon drive in her carriage, when the ladies of the old families, from their carriages, bowed to her coldly, almost imperceptibly, for her captain's family's sake—these high-nosed, lovely, ignorant women in silks like hers, but who had never been a week's journey away from their moss-greyed town or from their family plantations. They bowed to her, almost imperceptibly; but she—

She had seen Java Head, indistinct in slants of oriental rain,

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dropping away astern of the creaming wake; she had seen the coasts of the edge of this world, the coasts of mystery and loneliness. Standing alone and steady-eyed, she had heard the voices of men and women shaken with passion, and greed, and death, making undertones to the shrill squall and bubbling of strange music that these women would never know. She stood alone on the edge of the world; but they, they sat cosily in their family carriages, knowing so little of their men or of themselves, and bowed coldly to a newcomer who was married to a son of one of the old families. A renegade son who, lean and laughing, had gone away to sea and then come back again with . . .

At the end of the garden she turned and looked back at the Georgian house of rose brick, very old.

She hadn't expected anything so grand, nor so beautiful with time, when she had gone on board a lovely, rakish barque, lying in the river, with a husband whom she didn't know. It had all been so confusing. For the first time in her life, she had been confused.

She had looked up one night, in the gambling-rooms of Ah Quong, into a creased, laughing face, burnt bronze by the suns of Capricorn. White teeth, and eyes like steady pale blue flames, and a vein that twitched and knotted in his forehead when he was excited—and he had taken off his peaked cap and was holding it in an old-fashioned sort of way over his heart.

"You are Madame Hell. I have heard of you. Your Chinese name," he said, in a soft, dry, Southern voice. "You are too beautiful to be here."

Ah Quong's was the richest, the most respectable gambling place on the China Coast; and she had never let another man put his fingertips upon her, out here on the coast.

But this one had taken her arm in an easy sort of way and they were walking together towards the long table at the end of the cardroom where there was champagne and varnished duck and things like that, with Shanghai boys in white silk jackets to pour and to serve.

Ah Quong, that fat, dry philosopher, was standing in the door of his office to incline his head in a sort of cynical blessing as they passed, though she was supposed to be the smiling, cold-voiced hostess who kept the patrons in line.

Stumbling a little, because she was watching his face—nothing like that had ever happened to her before—and in something of an unbelieving daze, she heard him say, "It struck you, too, didn't it, beautiful? When we looked at each other."

She said carefully, "I think you must be—"

"No, lovely," he said. "What's your real name?"

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"Anne," she said. "Anne Paget."

"Onetime actress?"

"Look," she said. "That's—this is stupid and, anyway, it's nothing to you, no matter—"

"Oh, a great deal," he said, with a kindly sound like a laugh in his chest, as if he were terribly amused, but tenderly. "Because we are going to be together. So I had to know your name. Mine is Ronald Linett. Master of the barque *Golden Monsoon*. Moored at a buoy in your river just now. But I shall always call you Madame Hell. D'you mind? Have some champagne?"

Dazedly she took the glass and looked at his eyes again.

And he always had kept on calling her "Madame Hell." On their way down the South China Sea he had stopped abruptly in front of her deckchair one afternoon and said, "Look, lovely Madame Hell. There's a civil war on in the States, you know. This is our last voyage to the East for a while. D'you mind?"

"Not at all," she said. "But what do you intend to do next?"

"Blockade running," he had said.

And he had done very well at it. Very well indeed, with a lean, narrow-beamed, rakish steamer built in England for him. Their house was crammed with silks and plate, and diamonds were hidden away behind the brick stones of the hearth; seeing every day the elegant rags, the desperate poverty of the South, these lavish riches made him seem to her more than ever a renegade—a laughing, cynical renegade.

But no one else seemed to think so. For he was taking out cotton and tobacco in cargoes that loaded down his slim steamer to her main deck rails. And coming back he brought all the things of life that the Confederacy had thrown away to fight for The Cause; he brought coffee, and silks, and tea, and French stationery; and he brought beef and wheat for the Army; and he brought wool and leather and steel, and gunpowder in kegs to make up for the poor stuff that the Confederacy made in its own homemade arsenals. And he brought gold.

Gold, in bullion, to pay starving men who fought as men had never fought before with empty ammunition pouches. Who turned, on the long muddy roads, to snarl and fight again with their miserable rags flapping in the windy rain; to throw aside their empty ammunition pouches and go back up the long, long roads of mud, towards flaming guns, with only rusty bayonets . . .

Her captain was bringing in a load of English gold, in bullion. He would be in before the moon would rise. It was a waning moon and it rose very late tonight. She alone knew that he was coming in from the sea tonight—only she, that is, and his shipping

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agent—with the bullion. With a sudden tightness between the eyes, she thought of his shipping agent, Mr. Cartret. One of the most respected names in the state. But on the China Coast, where you looked at people not with automatic belief, that bland, large-chinned face with weak blue eyes might not have ranked so high . . .

And anyway, she thought, it's probably because Mrs. Cartret had bowed so coldly from her carriage the other afternoon. She realised that she hated these smug, highborn ladies with such quiet venom that it warped her judgment of all their world and all their people.

But she couldn't help it. Her captain had left her in this time-richened house to be a gentlewoman. To move impassively from room to room on quiet feet, where once her feet had a feeling of wings; to smile dim shadowy smiles over cups of tea, where once she had known free laughter; to drive in the afternoon through narrow, ancient streets, bowing to other ladies in other carriages, where once she had known great distances and the keen edge of danger. Sometimes she thought she would go mad —it was a greater strain than she had ever known anywhere; and sometimes she thought she simply couldn't stand it any longer.

She couldn't have stood it as long as this if it hadn't been for Mr. Ferrell.

Of course, though, she never let her captain know anything of

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all this. For in this old town, where his hard hunting, drinking, duelling ancestors had lived before him, he was in himself, without thinking, a great gentleman. A great gentleman, and he had left her—once his laughing, passionate companion—to stay alone and walk quietly, smiling dimly, from room to room. And he—he still went adventuring into the bright distances of the world.

Standing at the end of the garden, she bit her knuckles, clenched rigidly. What was he doing, that renegade heart, in the dark streets of the Caribbean ports where the cargoes were transhipped from England and from South America into the blockade runners? She thought she knew him; and there were dark girls in the Caribbean ports, and music from behind secret shutters in the dark streets above the water.

To her horror, she heard herself making a little whimpering sound under her breath. Jealousy is a sickness, a rotting sickness of the heart; it distorts in the mind a world, once loved, into fevered and obscene shapes. It gives to hands, which a little while ago knew only the ways of love, a shaking rigidity that could be translated into murder.

Carefully she unclenched her hands and stood for a moment breathing deep, shaken breaths. And smiled a little at herself until she could feel her rigid lips become really amused.

There was always Mr. Ferrell. That small, dark, deadly gambler from New Orleans, whom all men feared and many of these highborn women seemed to love, in a half-frightened way.

So quietly, one foot in front of another, she walked back into the house and heard the velvet sounds of chimes dying away. She went into the panelled dining-room and sat down all alone in the great highbacked chair at the end of the long table in the candlelight.

And lifting the first amber-clear silver spoonful of green terrapin soup to her amused lips, she thought, Yes. Mr. Ferrell is coming to call tonight. And I must give him his answer.

Mr. Ferrell came to call. He was announced while she was having her coffee in the library, all alone. In the door, he bowed slightly, a slender and lethal man in elegant clothes.

Over her hands he bowed again, and touched them with his small, dark, silky moustache, and said, "Well, Anne, have you decided?"

"Wait, please, Mr. Ferrell," she said, and rang the bell. When the coloured butler had brought in another massive silver tray, with a decanter of brandy and a glass on its crisp napkin, she said, "Please have your brandy. And you may smoke a cigar, if you wish. Then I will tell you."

"Anne, Anne, I—please, before you answer, remember all I

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have told you. All the world, and the rivers, and a life with me that you—We are the same kind of people, Anne. You know that. You know it in your heart, Anne."

"Please, Mr. Ferrell. I do remember. But have your brandy."

He poured, slopping the liquid a little. It was the first time she had ever seen those thin, dark little hands shake.

For an instant she thought with a sort of venomous, secret pleasure—shot straight at her captain—that it was emotion that made his hands unsteady. But then, with the practised eye of the China Coast, she saw he had been drinking heavily all the afternoon. Well, she had bargained for that. When she had practically decided to go with him.

It was his weakness. But she was deadly and she would hold him in line without mercy. And, as he had said, there was all the world, and the rivers of it where men and women could face danger, and distances, and in a queer way, beauty, together. If they were really the same kind of people.

And this thin steel weapon of a man was her own kind. They both had the same quiet, merciless ferocity for life—for all that life could hold, of beauty and of danger, for the world and its restless treasures of experience.

"Mr. Ferrell," she said.

"Yes, Anne?" His eyes were a little bloodshot and his lip twitched once; but the brandy had pulled him together again.

"I believe it might be possible," she said slowly. "I believe we should make a good team. With some conditions, though."

"Anne, Anne, any conditions," he said, just a little thickly. "You know how much I—"

"Wait," she said.

She poured a little more coffee into her delicate sage green Wedgwood cup, and watched him while he tilted the decanter again.

"You know, of course," she said, "that we should be, finally, completely outside the law."

He looked up at her. His eyes, steadied, became grey steel points. "I have always been," he said.

He lifted his glass, and his eyes became slightly vague again. "And so, I think, my dear, have you," he said, and smiled at her. His teeth were very sharp looking.

"Perhaps," she said. And stopped to think carefully for a minute before she said in an even and quiet voice, "There is my husband. I shall have to tell him. Before I go. If this is to be done, it will be done above the board."

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And that, she thought, is the test.

We will see how these two men will take that, one after the other, she thought. She knew how Ronald Linett would take it. She waited to see what this man, also coldly dangerous, would do.

For a long minute he sat looking into his glass of brandy. Then he drank it, and put the empty glass down and looked at her.

And she suddenly saw that he was very drunk.

Far drunker than she had thought—and beyond the mere drunkenness, a curious and venomous, terribly venomous, exaltation burnt suddenly in his eyes.

"Perhaps we need not worry about that, my dear," he said.

Quietly, she set her cup and saucer down.

"Just," she said softly, "just what do you mean?"

His eyes became grey steel again, but melted too soon. Much too soon.

"Never mind," he said. "It's I that you love, isn't it?"

Deliberately she reached over and took one of his hands, making her fingers soft and clinging as they touched the taut muscles.

"I have been thinking of nothing else," she said softly.

"Well?"

"But there is my husband."

He snarled abruptly. "Don't worry any more about that grinning bravo," he said. "With his fine airs, and the way he swings his shoulders when he pushes better men off the pavement."

"But," she said, still softly, more softly, "I don't think I quite understand what you mean when you—"

"He thinks he's coming in tonight, doesn't he?" His thin lips twisted and twitched, quickly, once. "Never mind. Never mind." He reached for the decanter again.

She leaned back in her chair and made her eyes deliberately dreamy. Only one other person in the Confederacy had known that Ronald—her captain—was planning to come in tonight, before the waning moon would rise.

Mr. Cartret.

She said carefully, "Mr. Ferrell, how are you doing with your—establishment out at the Sea Inn?"

She tried to remember that very old stone inn, half lighthouse in the days of the pirates, on the end of the cape which jutted far out to seaward, south of the channel entrance. Mr. Ferrell had taken rooms out there, where gentlemen of the town could play discreetly.

"Eh? Oh, well enough, dear. Well enough for now, until you can join me, and you and I can really— Anne, dear?"

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"Yes?"

"Tell me something," he said.

"Yes, dear?" Her lip curled suddenly. People learnt to be more discreet than this on the China Coast.

"One more coup," he said. "Biggest of all. Solves all our troubles. Lots of money, too. Enough for you and me to—" He set his glass down and cleared his throat. "Never mind," he said. "Never mind, little woman. You know nothing about it."

"No," she said, her voice scarcely above a whisper. "No, I suppose I don't."

After he had gone, she rang the bell. "I want the carriage. At once," she said.

And then she went upstairs to her bedroom and out of the cedar lined cupboard she took her threadbare old travelling cape. The collar turned up enough to half hide her thin, suddenly very white—no, gaunt—face.

She opened a chest of carved teak and heavy brass from the China Coast, and from among its folds of silks took a heavy piece of—adornment, which she slipped into her pocket.

It was a long drive out to the Sea Inn. Somewhere out there in the darkness, a few miles off the cape which the Sea Inn tipped, lay the blockading fleet, so close in that from the inn on a clear day the heavy frigates, the gunboats, and the swift sloops with folded wings could be seen on the horizon.

She left the carriage a hundred yards down the road, pulled up against the blacker darkness of a hedge, and walked towards the discreetly lighted doorway of the inn. She asked for Mr. Ferrell's gaming-rooms and, after one startled glance, the fat, dead-eyed landlord himself led her up the stairs to the third floor, knocked on a door—and backed away politely, not looking at her, as she flung open the door and walked in.

They were there, whom she expected to see.

Mr. Ferrell, twisting swiftly to his feet from his place at the table, his right hand slipping like the head of a snake towards the inside of his coat lapels. The hand stopped and fell away limply as he stared at her and swallowed once.

Mr. Cartret, flung back in his chair with surprise; one thick, well-kept hand covering his big chin, his small womanish lips which moved once or twice silently in prim fright before his hand too came limply away and he rose, murmuring in deep politeness, "Mrs. Linett. As I live." He seemed to gain assurance from the sound of his own deep, rich voice, and added, "It is delightful, madame. A profound pleasure."

She nodded once, and said dryly, "Thank you."

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The women—there were two of them—were about what she had expected. Young, rather common, though trying to correct it with the most elaborate crinolines, the most elaborate charming fluttering manners. The pert one had red hair, masses of it in a great soft knot; the languishing one had pale hair in poetic clusters beside her childlike cheekbones. The sort of women she would expect a Union agent and his gold to find to use.

She thought, These pallid creatures, these weak adventuresses—they should be on the China Coast some time and find out what women can be like, when they have to be. But she saw how Mr. Cartret had been hooked—beginning, probably, with gambling losses to Mr. Ferrell. It didn't take much of a China Coast eye to see this deal.

"We'll play," she said.

"But, Anne—my dear Mrs. Linett," Mr. Ferrell said, "we—we were not playing tonight."

"Never mind," she said. "We'll play. I'll deal."

Off the green top of the big table she picked up a new, fresh pack. The cards suddenly flowed like fluid between her two hands, and she said, "Sit down."

One by one, hesitantly, glancing in a queer way at one another, they did sit down. And she dealt, the cards whispering like an opening fan round the table.

"No wild cards," she said. "This is a professional game."

So they played, pretending to be absorbed in the faces of the cards; and after a while, with brandy on the table, pretending to be gay. Twice, Mr. Ferrell fumbled the cards almost imperceptibly but badly to a practised eye, as his delicate, spidery fingers twisted to deal. Within her, her lip curled again, but her face remained blank and pleasant, a little dreamy.

After a while she noticed that Mr. Cartret was sweating; clear drops stood in clusters on his rather fine brow, and with a queer look at Mr. Ferrell, he loosened his collar. But the drops gathered and trickled suddenly into his eyes. He used a fine cambric handkerchief. About that time Mr. Ferrell began stealing quick—what he thought were casual—glances at his watch, slipped secretly out of his elegant waistcoat pocket.

The two girls twittered a bit over their cards, looking with petulant, childlike helplessness towards Mr. Cartret as they opened their cards, as if pleading charmingly for his wise advice; and they mourned publicly, charmingly, as Anne raked in pot after pot. And the big, oily English pistol was heavy in Anne's pocket.

It was after midnight, and Mr. Ferrell had glanced at his watch quite a nervous number of times, when she saw the break.

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Mr. Ferrell nodded, swiftly, with a slight sideways jerk of his smooth head, to the redhaired girl. And with the most charming manners, the girl got up and excused herself and went into another room and closed the door. Staring at the door, Anne thought quickly, working things out. That was the seaward room, the one whose windows, of all in the inn, faced the sea.

So, she thought, it was possible that Mr. Cartret had spilt, finally, just last night, or today. It was a hunch worth playing.

Quietly she, too, got up and walked to that door to the seaward room and flung it open.

The redhaired girl was at one of the windows, carefully busy. For on the broad sill of the window were three big lamps, each with a powerful reflector affixed to it—two close together, and then another a little to the right.

And the girl had lit the first lamp and was bending over the second.

Anne could imagine it quite clearly. A small boat from the blockading fleet standing in under the shore, watching the windows of the inn. The lamps, then, two and one; and then—Her hand came out of her pocket with the heavy pistol. It slammed once, jumping in her hand, and the one lighted lamp went to pieces in a sheet of flame.

"And now, my dear," Anne said to the redhaired girl, "we'll go back and sit down—and wait."

Because she had turned very quickly with the revolver in her hand as she waved the girl out, Anne caught the rest of them—not quite flat-footed, but just rising, just reaching for their pistols.

"Please," she said, "I meant it. We will sit down."

Again, but this time under the merciless, steady o of her pistol muzzle, the hands fell limply away. And they did sit down again. There was a smell of burning oil and rug and varnished wood smoke from the seaward room. Behind her back, Anne closed the door, and sat at the head of the table.

"So," she said, "we will wait."

It was a long time. The longest time she had known. And the weight of the big revolver was making the muscles of her wrist jump, when—

Every mortal at that table stiffened suddenly, staring, listening.

For, sullen with distance across the sea, came suddenly the tolling of great guns offshore.

The great guns of the blockading fleet.

And then—and then, a lighter sound, too—the nasty, jolting cracks of smaller guns coming over the sea.

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Her captain was coming in.

"I think," she said quietly, "that we will all fold our hands on the table. Where I can see them."

Reluctantly, they did. Their four pairs of hands were clasped, before the o of her pistol muzzle. Clasped in queer, almost prayer-like attitudes on the table.

And the smell of burning rugs and varnished wood made their eyes wild and terrified and apprehensive in the blazing candlelight.

"That's it," she said. "And we will keep our hands clasped. And I think you might, you know, really pray, while you're about it." She stopped and listened. The great guns were rolling in peals—and the swift, running whacks of the smaller ones were still replying. "Because," she said, "if he doesn't get through, every soul in this room will die before I leave."

And from under the edge of the door of the seaward room, a thin page of smoke, growing thicker, began to pour upwards into this room, and gather across the ceiling, dropping in swirls down towards the candle flames on the table, hurting the eyes, making the eyes of the four whom she watched widen with terror.

"We'll wait," she said. Then: "Keep your hands clasped, Mr. Ferrell."

"Anne!" he said. "Don't you remember—?"

"No," she said. "A better man is coming in from sea."

And she could see him as she held the revolver steady: a creased, partly laughing but perhaps snarling face, now, above the edge of armour-plate on his bridge.

Yes. Whatever he was—the swaggering, silly idiot!—he was her captain; and he was coming in from sea.

The room was thick with smoke. It was a choking smoke of wool and varnish, and tears were streaming down her cheeks. But the o of the pistol muzzle was steady as her captain's eyes.

And then, with a new authoritative blasting that jarred the dusty panes of that inn, the massive guns of the fort across the channel opened fire. Those grinding roars shook the floor.

And running underneath them, still firing back, came the jolting cracks—the laughter—of the smaller guns.

Her captain had come in. And was running now under friendly guns that were firing over him at blockading men-of-war that had followed him in too close.

She sighed and looked at Mr. Cartret.

The door of the seaward room was in flames now, in charring, varnish-licking flames, and he was in silhouette against the swirling redness. He looked back at her, that benevolent,

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big-chinned figure of respectability, through the smoke—and went for his gun.

The English pistol, that heavy, oily adornment from the China Coast, whacked and bucked once more in her tired hand.

And then she got up and went out, and turned the key in the lock of the door, and went down the stairs, and said good night with a slow, grave inclination of her head to the fat, white landlord, and walked down the hundred yards of road and got into her carriage under the black shadow of the hedge, under the stars, and said, "I think we will go home now," and folded her hands and closed her eyes.

She was in the drawing-room when he burst open the front door and came walking swiftly in.

With her hair brushed out and newly pinned up in the most dignified fashion, she was in the drawing-room, at the piano, playing a transcription of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik—A Little Night Music*—the one small and ironic comment she permitted herself.

Like a gale of wind, like a remembrance of violence and loveliness, he came through the drawing-room door—and stopped. Holding his peaked, rakish cap over his heart.

"My darling," he said. "Madame Hell. You are more lovely every time I see you."

Her fingers stopped on the keys; and her heart stopped too. Slowly she turned her head and looked round at him; he was laughing, that creased and renegade laughter she wanted to share again.

She got up from the piano bench, her knees like water. As weak as water—with love. She said, "I—"

"Darling! What's the matter?"

"Nothing," she said. "I mean, I didn't know. Not until I had nearly lost you. Never mind."

"Oh, you mean tonight? All that noise?" he said. "Don't worry about it. I gave as good as I took. A few days to patch up the holes, and I— Darling Madame Hell. What *is* the matter? My lovely?"

Quietly she went to him and put her face down on the salt-tasting white starch of his shirtfront.

"Hush, hush," he said. "Do you know, lovely, a funny thing. That place out on the South Cape, that inn, it was on fire as I came by, in the channel. Blazing like the very mischief."

"How—how odd," she said.

"Darling. Darling! Madame Hell—why *are* you crying—but what the devil are you laughing about?"

Quietly, taking her face away, she said, "You."

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And, picking up her skirts at the foot of the dim staircase—the rich, heavy skirts of a married gentlewoman—she bowed to him as a great lady bows from a staircase, spreading her skirts.

She inclined her head so that he should not see her eyes. And picking up her skirts, she walked on up the stairs.

Tomorrow she would drive in her carriage again.

In time, perhaps, she hoped, she would learn the dignity and the courage of a gentlewoman.

As President of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Words, any act of maltreatment naturally comes under my jurisdiction.

Recently I had to draw attention to gross misconduct towards the English language on the part of house and estate agents. In describing the properties that they were hawking around, they resort to such distortions as these :—

" *Important* "—meaning pretentious.

" *Compact* "—meaning a house fit only for dwarfs.

" *Unrestored* "—meaning ruined.

" *Charming* "—meaning revolting.

And so on.

Now comes a more subtle and less heinous but still indictable piece of misrepresentation. It is the language used on the colour-cards issued by paint makers to describe the various hues of their wares.

White (and either white is white or not white) is demoralised into " Off White," " Broken White " and " White Spice."

I am waiting for Bing Crosby to sing : " I'm dreaming of a White Spice Christmas."

An uncertain grey is called " Pink Pigeon." A washed-out blue is known as " Platinum," and beige is enigmatically titled " Pink Pebble."

The only shade that seems to have beaten these Procrustean word-tormentors is black.

A White-Black? No.

A Grey-Black? Hardly.

A " Blush," " Coral," " Desert Glo," " Chartreuse," " Thistle-down," " Wild Orchid," " Waterfall," " Neptune," " Phantom," " Leather," " Regency," " Lotus," " Fiesta," " Samurai," " Blossom " or " Oatmeal " black?

No. We'll settle for a Black black.

CASSANDRA, *from the Daily Mirror*

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The Best Washerwoman

By ROBERT CULFF

THE High Feasts of my mother's calendar were the days when Maria Dolores came to do the washing. Though she appeared once a fortnight with tick-tock regularity, there was always a pulse of nervous anticipation on the mornings when she was due. These began a good hour earlier than usual; my mother rose with a long, vague list of Things Which Must be Done, and breakfast was hurried through like a meal before the start of a journey. My father blustered; but even he had to submit to being rushed.

At half past nine or ten a salvo of barking from our eleven dogs would herald the arrival of Maria Dolores. She was a small woman, dressed from headscarf to the tips of her rope-soled alpargatas in black; as she drove up in the two-wheeled sulky with Ramon, the peon who went to the pueblo for the letters, she sat upright, her little jet-bead eyes fixed in a determined forward stare. With her lipless mouth in a tight line, her knees pressed together, her thin elbows tucked in, she had the Southern woman's knack of insisting on her femininity. She was very conscious that she had ridden nine leagues from the pueblo, unchaperoned—*alone with a man.*

The moment the sulky stopped she would climb fussily, awkwardly down from the high seat between the wheels, brushing aside Ramon's gesture of help. "With such big *brutal* types," I once heard her confide in an undertone to my mother, "one must not allow even a touch."

On alighting she always stood still for a few moments to heave a melodramatic sigh of relief. My mother, who had run out of the house at the first dog bark, would step forward eagerly; in answer to the conventional greetings and inquiries Maria Dolores never said anything: it was unnecessary. Her hands, palms upward to the air, made twin gestures of resignation which were far more expressive than words.

After a bowl of coffee and a hunk of galleta, the local bread, taken with the cook in the kitchen, Maria Dolores would disappear into the wash-house to begin her day's work; my mother always

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on the Pampas

forced herself to endure a further interval of aimless, distracted activity before finding an excuse to follow. Then for hours afterwards their voices might be heard in whispered counterpoint, going on and on without pause. If I attempted to join them I was shushed away with, " Now run along, dear—and Ricky, *find yourself something to do.*"

In a misery of resentment I would wander off, kicking up jets of dust with the toes of my canvas sand-shoes, to sulk on the outside edge of the house plantation. From the high branches of a private tree, while deep in a fantasy about being an orphan, I would gaze out across miles of table-top flatness to the uninterrupted rim of distance, and savour the complementing of empty land and empty sky—as a reflection of my own barren prospects.

Our estancia—the ranch my father managed—was medium sized: a man on a good horse could ride round it in a single day. Within the border fences, as beyond them, there was just a monotonous grey-green plain, sometimes broken up into fields of

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wheat, corn, or lucerne, but for the most part left as rough grazing for sheep or cattle. The flatness of the land was varied only by the flat silver of great salt lakes fringed with clumps of pointed esparto grass, or an occasional oasis of dark-leaved paraiso trees, planted to shelter the livestock from the summer's glare.

As this was the only world I had ever lived in I was not aware of the difficulties my parents had in adjusting themselves to it. There were mornings when my father would wake in a mood as gipsy-dark as his eyes; then he walked like a man through ashes, and one glance out into the empty distance would mark his large face with the expression of an animal that cannot understand why it is sick.

These were black days for us all, but I was less disturbed by them than I was by my mother's answer to her environment. The regular advent of Maria Dolores, mother's one indispensable link with the outside world and its gossip, was my fortnightly penance. While the secret talks in the wash-house were going on I would spend the time in bleak idleness, hunched under a weight of jealous despair which was the worse for being only half recognised. It was during such a miserable afternoon that I first decided to spy on them.

I decided? But groping back into the past with time-blunted fingers, the decision seems rather to have been taken for me: it all began as an accidental combination of season and the unexpected fountaining up of bitterness. There were points of light that day, under the trees, vibrating headily like coins shaken in a dark moneybox; a breeze gusted in from the south; spirals of dust skated across the patio, alarming the chickens. Perhaps a spring devil blew into my head; all I remember is a jar as I suddenly came to a full stop; then with a great shout of "Bitches!" I had swung round, and charged away across the full length of the patio, under a strip of shade, and with another shout, right through the wash-house door.

Maria Dolores and my mother were standing with the wooden washtub between them. My mind clicked like a camera: the snapshot is still clear. Maria Dolores had pushed up her left sleeve to the shoulder; she was pointing an accusatory finger at a large blue bruise just above her elbow.

My mother turned on me furiously. "How dare you come bursting in like this!"

I slunk out with no word of apology or protest. For the first time it occurred to me that the wash-house conversations were not merely women's talk. They were about something. I resolved to find out what. . .

That evening I took my seat at the dinner-table with carefully

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downcast eyes, but with ears that were as sensitive as two microphones. Mother, I thought, seemed more than usually excited. When Father had finished carving the leg of lamb he sat down, and with a smile looked across the table.

"Well?" he asked, as though he too had noticed something.

My fork wavered in mid air.

Mother pretended not to have heard. She tinkled the hand bell, and quickly jerked a blob of mashed potatoes on to the maid's plate. After it had been taken away, Father tried again.

"What's the news from Maria Dolores?"

Mother noticed something was wrong with the lamp. She went to the other end of the table, and adjusted the wick elaborately. As the light flickered up and down I could hear her voice in a tantalising undertone.

As she returned to her plate I heard the words, "It's really a most extraordinary thing," as a pennant, trailing behind her.

Conversation during the rest of the meal was scattered with enigmatic remarks, as elusive and as eagerly gobbled up as currants in a bun. Towards the end of the pudding course Mother said, "My dear—referring back to a—a certain matter—something *must* be done. Or there'll be a dreadful tragedy . . ."

Perhaps after all there had been something wrong with the lamp, for at the word "tragedy" the room darkened for a moment.

Father shrugged his shoulders and closed his eyes in the Latin gesture he had acquired from living so long on the Pampas. "It's none of our business. As you know, I never believe in coming between—"

A warning "Shh!" cut him short and drew a final line under the subject. After this I became even more determined to solve the mystery of our washerwoman.

I began by making inquiries. The first person I approached was the cook. I found her, next morning, sitting on the verandah in the mild spring sunshine, shelling peas.

I sidled to a spot beside the basket.

"Josepha," I said nervously.

The cook gave no sign of having heard. She was a short-tempered woman, and was not fond of children.

When she turned I was ready with an ingratiating smile. "Can I do some of those peas for you?" I asked.

Josepha's thick moustache-like eyebrows rose in astonishment—for I had no reputation for being a helpful child. A moment or two of suspicion clicked by; then a gruff "Hmm!" indicated that my offer had been accepted.

The business of shelling peas continued for some time.

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Anxiously I watched the basket begin to empty while I tried to find words to introduce the subject of Maria Dolores. I was almost in despair when Josepha broke the tension. She complained of the kitchen, the stove and the family; she complained of the maids and the peons; she complained of our guests. "Such numbers, Dios mio!" she lamented, flicking three pale peas expertly one after the other, out of their pod into the basin. "Today, the family—twenty people tomorrow!

"And then there is that Maria Dolores!" the cook suddenly said.

My hands jerked convulsively; a pod-load of peas missed the basin altogether, and rolled away across the verandah floor.

"Dios mio! What a cross the woman is! She has the body of a sparrow and the jaws of a cow. The amount she manages to stuff into that little mouth of hers—it's unbelievable. She must put her stomach away in a drawer until the day she's due to come here."

"She's—she's unfortunate," I ventured.

The cook gave a sigh that rivalled those of the washerwoman.

"Yes, unfortunate. Poor woman!" she echoed automatically; then she swung round to look into my face. "And what do you know about it?" she demanded.

Flustered, I had no time to bluff. "No—nothing."

"Nothing you know—and nothing you'll learn! From me!" Josepha announced with a grim, pursed-up smile. "Now get along with you."

The last of the peas had been shelled; it was neatly timed.

The other servants were equally uncommunicative. And when I spoke to Ramon he shook his head. "Nino, one doesn't speak of such things," he cautioned. "It is bad luck."

"But Ramon," I begged, "what *has* happened to Maria Dolores?"

Ramon grinned uneasily. "Ask your father," he said.

There were nights when I would lie awake while I composed flickering melodramas knitted together from threads stolen from Victorian children's tales. In them Maria Dolores was an unlikely heroine—at one moment a match-woman huddled in tinsel snow, at another a wickedly subdued heiress waiting for a swift-witted deliverer. My dreams were tinged with fever.

The day before the next laundering I slipped into the washhouse. My heart drummed guiltily against the cage of my ribs; I nearly turned back.

I looked round. It was a whitewashed, windowless room. At one end was the boiler, grey ashes still in the fireplace under it.

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The inverted washtub, the pails, the long-handled broom, and a scrubbing brush were neatly lined up against the opposite wall. To the left of the door was a large packing-case. On this were laid out bars of yellow household soap, a blue-bag in a chipped saucer, and a pile of wooden spoons.

I noticed that the packing-case was standing a few inches from the wall. It had been turned on its side so that the top, which was open, faced inwards. If the case could be shifted a little farther away it would be possible, I thought, to conceal myself inside.

I pulled; the case was heavy, but it moved. Drawing my stomach flat, I squeezed round the edge.

The interior smelt sour and of musty wood-shavings. I could hear the drip-drip of water—perhaps from the boiler tap; then I was startled by the dry rustle of a piece of paper, magnified by silence, being blown across the floor by a gust of wind. The tiny sound was so clear that, in a flash, I realised I had found the perfect hiding-place for an eavesdropper. After a brief moral conflict I decided to take advantage of this discovery.

The timing of my scheme, however, was not easy to work out. If I hid myself before Maria Dolores arrived I should have to wait, cramped up and almost suffocated, until she and my mother entered the wash-house. And then how was I to get out again before the morning's wash was done? I puzzled my head over these problems for the rest of the day.

Lying sleeplessly in bed that night, I was still working out one farfetched scheme after another—and rejecting them. When I woke next morning, heavy-eyed and out of sorts, I was faced by the inescapable and depressing truth. There was nothing for it. I would have to spend the morning, the whole morning, crouched in that wretched, sour-smelling box.

It would be worth it, I told myself without much spirit.

My fortitude was never put to the test. When I took my place at the breakfast table, Father still had not come in. We had been waiting some minutes before the front door sounded, and he appeared. One glance at his face was enough to tell me that he was in One of his Moods. He stood at the head of the table for a few moments, as though saying a silent and melancholy grace, before he lowered himself heavily into his chair. His head remained bent, but I knew his quick eyes were alert for any excuse which might justify an outburst of releasing anger.

The meal progressed through slowly-ticking minutes of apprehension. Nervously Mother picked at her bacon and eggs; nervously I tried to eat my cereal without undue crunching. At last, when I was just getting to the point where I could

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decently ask To Be Excused, I heard Father clear his throat. "Well?" he asked my mother. "Will it take you long to put on your things?"

Mother did not answer at first.

"I said, will it take you long to get ready?"

"Why—why no, dear. No, I suppose not."

"Then perhaps you'll be dressed by the time I get the car out?"

"But—"

"I've got to go into the pueblo. And you can do your shopping."

Mother touched her mouth nervously.

"But, darling," she reminded. "It's Maria Dolores' day."

Father got to his feet. "Damn Maria Dolores! The woman knows what to do without your supervising, I take it?"

"Well, yes. But you see, I—"

"Good! Then you'll be ready in fifteen minutes."

After my father had gone, Mother sat looking down at the table. Then she blew her nose, and hurried into the bedroom.

I was in front of the house, idling on the edge of the patio, when, precisely fifteen minutes later, the car appeared. Father tooted the horn imperiously twice, and after a very short interval, twice again. Mother ran out of the front door, calling instructions over her shoulder to the cook. Apprehensively she got into the front seat, and with a jerk, they drove off.

Half an hour later Maria Dolores arrived. The cook was there to meet her; and so was I. I listened while Josepha explained Mother's absence; Maria Dolores pursed up her thin mouth and, though she made no comment, she was obviously both disappointed and offended. Then the two women climbed the verandah steps and made for the kitchen door. I began to follow, but the cook turned and shushed me away. "No! I'll have no children in my kitchen. Nino, go and play!"

I dawdled towards the wash-house, and entered it. A chicken came scraping up to the open door and looked in, its head cocked on one side, its round eye registering surprise. I flapped my arms, and it squawked stupidly away.

As I stood wondering what I should do, I heard light footsteps, and Maria Dolores entered. She gave me a look of disapproval, tied her black apron round her waist with a double rapid jerk, and began to arrange her equipment.

I moved away from the packing-case, sliding the inside edges of my rubber soles over the cement floor. I sat down on an upturned pail, just within the doorway. The hot air fanned against my face; I shut my eyes, and again all the sounds of the morning

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seemed magnified. Close behind me I could hear Maria Dolores' short-tempered movements, while from outside birdsong drifted down from the paraiso trees; a dog barked like a cough; the American iron mill turned with a monotonous squeak, and a gentle slosh-slosh sounded as the water it was pumping fell jet by jet into the great round tank.

I began to nod; Maria Dolores settled down to quiet, rhythmical scrubbing. She always started on the large articles, leaving the more delicate things—"las cositas finas" as she called them—until her hands had been made gentle by fatigue.

I was almost asleep when a great sigh made me raise my head with a jerk. I looked round; Maria Dolores sighed again.

"Are you sad?" I asked.

"Ah! Life is sad, nino," she answered.

I fixed her with a stare, willing her to continue. She twisted the towel she was washing into a tight ball, and banged it sharply against the scrubbing-board. Silence.

"There are times when I find life sad, too."

Maria Dolores' eyes rolled scornfully. "Bah! What do you know about life? You—you are no more sad than a little bird."

I waited, my breath caught, my tongue between my teeth.

"If you were in my place—then, then you would know what it was to be sad."

For a few moments Maria Dolores paused; then her thin arms became very active. One of my father's shirts was snatched up to be tortured in soapsuds.

"It is women who suffer," she went on. "And it is all the fault of you men. You don't believe me? Look, then!"

Flicking the water off her hands, she smoothed them on her apron. "Look!" she commanded again as she rolled up her sleeve.

There, above the elbow, was a bruise—perhaps the same bruise I had seen before. I felt almost faint from excitement.

"Ay, que vergüenza! Yes, the shame of it! You may well stare, nino. In horror!"

"How—how did you get it?"

"Ha! You'd like to know, I dare say. But enough!"

I nodded my head in sympathy, brushing aside an urge to pry; Maria Dolores returned to her work.

I continued to stare at her, rocking from side to side in an effort to attract her attention. At last she raised her eyes.

"Can you be discreet?" she asked.

"Discreet?"

"Can you keep a secret? Or would you shame a poor woman by talking of her affairs to everyone you met?"

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"No, I wouldn't do that."

"You swear it?"

I nodded. "I swear," I said.

Maria Dolores hesitated; then she told me to come nearer. I picked up my pail and, placing it close to the washtub, sat down facing her.

"You saw the bruise on my arm?" she asked in a low voice. "You were wondering how it came there, eh?"

She glanced nervously over her shoulder, though there could be no one in the wash-house to hear.

"It happened on Tuesday," she began. "It is a day I shall remember—always. I had been busy in the house doing all the things a woman is expected to do for nothing. Towards evening I say to myself, 'Now, what would my Pablo like for his supper?' At last I decide to make a puchero: a good puchero has richness—it satisfies a man. I fetch fresh water for the pot, and put it on the fire; I take the meat out of the cupboard—a fine big piece; a few carrots come next, some onions, garlic, rice, three turnips, some leeks chopped small, salt, pepper—it is a feast! Then I sit by the door with my knitting, and wait. The sun moves over, and touches the tops of the trees: no sign of Pablo.

"It begins to get dark. The frogs and crickets start to sing. I go to the gate, look down the road. Nothing! We have no clock; I call on my neighbour. 'Dona Inez,' I say. 'Would you do me the favour of telling me the time?' Eight o'clock! 'Santa Maria!' I cry. 'What has happened to Don Pablo?'

"I go back. The puchero is bubbling on the fire; I am afraid it will spoil. Time passes. I light the lamp. Still Don Pablo hasn't come. At last, when I am in despair, the dog jumps up and wags his tail."

She paused to tuck a strand of hair under her headscarf. Her lips moved silently as though she were continuing the story to herself.

"He had come home?" I asked, leaning forward expectantly.

Maria Dolores made an imperious gesture: she disliked interruptions. "Yes, it was Don Pablo," she said. "And he was drunk!" Again she paused; then she went on, "He is not a bad man, my Pablo—don't think it. It is just that the others—the good-for-nothings, the borrachones—persuade him against his will. Well, Don Pablo comes in, swaying like a newborn calf. He goes straight over to the stove. 'What's this?' he cries. 'A puchero for your supper.' He stands there for a moment, and then before I can stop him, his big hands shoot out, and he has lifted the pot, high above his head. 'A puchero!' he shouts like an idiot. He begins to dance. The heat from the pot suddenly

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strikes him. He gives a shout of pain, and then—oh, I shall never forget it!—then he tosses my beautiful puchero into the air.

"Dios, what a disaster! The rice in the fire, vegetables on all sides, the meat under the table. I give a great scream. 'You brute!' I cry. 'You cannibal!' Pablo turns on me like a bull. 'Brute?' he shouts. 'Cannibal? So this is the way you speak to a man in his own house?' His eyes are red. He comes towards me with his head down. I dart behind the table. He picks up a chair by one leg—he is so strong! 'Help!' I scream. 'Assassin!' He throws the chair—it breaks in little pieces by my head. I am tossed to the floor—it is my last hour on earth!"

Maria Dolores clasped her hands, and raised them to her forehead in a gesture of supplication. Her body shook, her teeth were bared in a hideous grimace of agony.

I sat horrified, oblivious of everything but her.

After what seemed a very long time I saw the tension leave her body; the hands came away from her face, and she smiled. As though suddenly becoming aware of me she stared intently into my eyes; then she took up a piece of washing and plunged it into the tub.

"When I dare to look," Maria Dolores continued in a quieter tone, "I see Pablo sitting in the middle of the floor. The tears are falling down his face. 'God forgive me!' he cries like a child. I help him to bed; then I find the meat under the table, and wash it at the pump. There is enough to eat cold for breakfast."

Maria Dolores became very busy with her scrubbing; the story, I realised, was over. And the mystery was solved! I could hardly believe my luck.

After this I always contrived to spend time in the wash-house on the days when Maria Dolores came. At first she told her troubles to my mother, and then in secret repeated them to me. I do not think she found the double task at all irksome. What she needed was an audience—and anyone's ears would do. Later, by steps I have since forgotten, the three of us came together to share the wash-house tales between us.

I was almost as fascinated by them as was my mother. Maria Dolores' voice opened up whole areas of experience I had never really believed to exist outside storybooks. Into our calm and protected existence she brought the spice of violence; she gave us a glimpse of a world where almost any outrage could happen: huge hard-fisted men pummelled each other over an accidentally spilt glass of wine, turned on their womenfolk like animals, knocked down their children. All this was created in flashes, and though told in simple, childlike words, was

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embellished with such a wealth of gesture, expressive mime, and cunning pause that the scene would almost take shape before our eyes. In her humble way, Maria Dolores was a creator of verbal magic.

Months passed; the summer hardened and grew hotter. The estancia's water supply failed, and the cattle started to die. For the most part they were Ayrshires from England and were unadapted to drink brine-laden water. Even the sheep were sometimes found, far away from the empty drinking-troughs, lying on their swollen sides with flies in clusters round their mouths.

Father walked about with a face darkened by sun and anxiety. He wrote long demanding letters to the Buenos Aires office; he consulted local water-diviners who came and shook their heads; he sent telegrams. Finally he threw himself into the car, and drove furiously into the pueblo to telephone. Within a week, a surveyor was sent to stay with us.

He strode selfconsciously about our dusty, sun-whitened acres in shining, new top-boots. Calculations were made; discussions went on into the night.

The outcome of this visit was that Father was given permission to begin deep-level boring for water. There was great excitement and much activity. Lorries arrived, loaded with men and long lengths of iron piping. A derrick was raised in the Uno Grande, and work began.

Twice a day Father climbed into the car and drove out to see what progress was being made. Sometimes I was allowed to go with him, and as a special favour, given a kerosene can of water to pour down the shaft to lubricate the drill. The cream-thin mud oozed to the surface; sometimes it was coloured grey, sometimes reddish-brown, occasionally almost blue.

Among the men recruited from the pueblo was Maria Dolores' husband. I had met him before: he came annually to help with the sheep-shearing; but I had not known then who he was. Now I gazed up at him with profound interest. Two big, rather prominent eyes looked back at me with unsuspecting friendliness. So this, I thought, was the monster whose handiwork I had been examining month by month. It was a great thrill.

One afternoon, a week or so after the commencement of the drilling, I was loitering in the shade of the verandah when I saw Ramon hurry up, and knock at the kitchen door. He demanded to see El Patron; after a few minutes Father hastened out. I edged towards them, and heard enough to understand that there had been an accident at the boring. Later I learnt that Maria Dolores'

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husband had been killed. The drill had unexpectedly struck water; the pressure had shot the shaft into the air; coming down, it had fallen across Don Pablo's back, breaking it.

Maria Dolores missed her next visit—it was to be expected, Mother said sadly—and the laundry was done with a great deal of grumbling in the servants' quarters. When, after a month, the washerwoman still did not appear, Mother took the car, and drove with me into the pueblo to find out why. She was met by stubborn resistance. No, Maria Dolores told her, it was impossible. As a married woman she had been able, though against her better judgment, to travel alone with Ramon in the sulky. But as a widow—what would the world say?

My mother pleaded; and after an hour of bargaining, Maria Dolores agreed to come at twice her former wage.

But nothing was the same after that. There were no bruises to show, no stories of sudden violence; and when Don Pablo was mentioned at all, it was with the ghost of one of those famous sighs. "Ah, he was a good man," Maria Dolores would say defensively. "May his soul rest in peace."

My mother fretted. "She's quite a broken creature," was her comment.

And indeed, we all began to notice a sad change in Maria Dolores. One sensed that she moved a trifle more slowly, that her quick eyes no longer seemed to notice the little things of her world. The laundry, too, was less impeccably done. There was a careless mark on a sheet one week; a tear in a pillowcase the next. Father's white bombachas acquired a yellow tinge. "The damn woman's got no energy," he complained. "You'll have to get rid of her."

When, indeed, it looked as though we would lose her, a ray of hope pierced our domestic gloom.

One week Maria Dolores arrived clutching a neatly-packed parcel. My mother no longer came to the wash-house, but I—perhaps because I was even more bored than she—often sat on my upturned pail, hoping for another story.

"Nino," Maria Dolores said in something like her old, conspiratorial voice. "Nino, ven aqui."

I got eagerly to my feet, sensing a development.

"Would—would you care to do a commission for me?"

I nodded.

"Would you take this to—to Ramon? It's a cake—I made it myself. But on no account must you tell him I sent it."

I took a parcel from her, and turned to hurry out. Maria Dolores put a wet hand on my sleeve. "You must promise not to say who it is from. Say a friend."

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I found Ramon saddling Father's chestnut mare by the side of the galpon. I pushed the parcel towards him; he rubbed a big hairy hand over his face, pressing his nose sideways. "A cake!" he echoed in bewilderment. "For me?"

"From a lady," I told him.

On her next visit Maria Dolores commissioned me again. "It's a pudding this time," she said. "A meat pudding. Delicious! My husband always liked my puddings. You'll take it to Ramon—but remember, not a word."

Again I promised, and again I told Ramon, "From a lady."

He took it in silence, without hesitation, but with a wary expression on his face. "Gracias, nino," he said, as though the present had come from me.

On her third visit Maria Dolores merely pushed a parcel into my arms and said, "Take it, mocito—you know what to do."

"What's inside it?" I asked.

"A few pasties—nothing worth mentioning."

The fourth parcel marked the two-month period. Maria Dolores was visibly nervous when she handed it to me. "For Ramon," she said unnecessarily; and then turned to her scrubbing. I stood in silence. "Tarts," she added in a low voice. And then, blushing slightly, "One of my husband's new shirts. Never worn at all. But you can't keep things for ever. No use letting good cloth rot in a cupboard."

Looking back now I am sure that during all this period, during those eight long rides to and from the pueblo in the sulky, nothing had been said between them. And therefore, perhaps the outcome was hardly as unexpected as it seemed at the time.

One day I was sitting in the corner of my father's "office," drawing in an out-of-date ledger, when there was a knock at the door. Father called, "Come in!" and Ramon entered. He had a foolish grin on his goodnatured face.

"Well?" Father asked, looking up from his account books. I merged myself into a shadow.

"Senor, I wish to obtain your permission."

"My permission?"

Ramon stood heavily on one leg, and then lurched to the other.

"My permission," Father prompted.

"*Si, senor!*" The words exploded much too loudly; Ramon hastily modified his tone. "Si, senor. I took the liberty—last night, senor. Of asking Jos— of asking your good cook whether—she would honour me. That is I—" The carefully prepared speech spluttered to a standstill.

Father smiled his paternal smile. "Are you trying to tell me that you and Josepha are planning to get married?"

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"Si, senor. Con su permiso, senor."

"Congratulations!" Father slapped Ramon's back and offered him a cigarette. "I hope you both will be very happy," he said. "But I trust you—er—won't deprive us of our cook."

"Oh no, senor! I shall be pleased if you will allow her to continue. She's been very contented here."

And so it was arranged. Married quarters were provided for them, and later that month Josepha and Ramon drove into the pueblo in their best clothes for the ceremony.

It was the end of Maria Dolores. She came a few times after that—once or twice, perhaps. Then we had news that she was ill. Mother was not alarmed at first. She sent a message and a jar of English jam. She talked about a temporary indisposition; but she was wrong. When next we heard, Maria Dolores was dead.

"She died of a broken heart, poor soul," her sister told Mother after the funeral service. "The ways of God are strange. To think of her pining for such a brute as Don Pablo."

Mother came home sadly. A replacement was found, of course: a brisk, efficient woman with excellent references. But she was lamentably discreet, and always too busy to talk. After a few halfhearted attempts at conversation, Mother gave her up.

That year the autumn was late in coming. Mother and I spent the long hot siesta hours in our parlour with the shutters over the windows, idly thumbing through old copies of English women's magazines.

One afternoon we were sitting together on the sofa when the maid came in to lay the table for afternoon tea. When she had finished, Mother leaned over and examined the edge of the cloth.

She looked at it for some time and then, as though speaking her thoughts aloud, she said, "You know, since we lost Maria Dolores everything has a greyness about it. There's no one who can wash as she did, poor thing. She had a gift—some of these women are very clever. They have secret recipes. Inherited from Indian grandmothers, sometimes. Look at this cloth, for instance."

I looked; it seemed white enough.

Mother shook her head. "I really believe Maria Dolores was unique," she said.

There was a pause, and then she added under her breath and very sadly, "I believe there isn't another woman on the Pampas who can wash as well as she could. I'm afraid we'll never find her like again."

It was true: we never did.

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★ *John Collier writes with a wicked brand of satirical fantasy all his own—one of his favourite literary characters is the devil! This month's readers' request:*

ROPE ENOUGH

BY JOHN COLLIER

HENRY FRASER, well assured that almost everything is done by mirrors, was given a job in India. No sooner had he set foot on shore than he burst into a horse-laugh. Those who were meeting him asked in some alarm the cause of this merriment. He replied he was laughing at the mere idea of the Indian Rope Trick.

He emitted similar startling sounds, and gave the same explanation, at a tiffin where he was officially made welcome; likewise on the Maidan, over chota peg, in rickshaws, in bazaars, in the Club, and on the polo ground. Soon he was known from Bombay to Calcutta as the man who laughed at the Indian Rope Trick, and he gloried in the well-deserved publicity.

There came a day, however, when he was sitting in his bungalow, bored to death. His boy entered and, with suitable salaams, announced that a mountebank was outside, who craved the honour of entertaining the sahib with a performance of the Indian Rope Trick. Laughing heartily, Henry consented, and moved out to his chair upon the verandah.

Below, in the dusty compound, stood a native who was emaciated to a degree, and who had with him a spry youngster, a huge mat basket, and a monstrous great sword. Out of the basket he dragged some thirty feet of stout rope, made a pass or two, and slung it up into the air. It stayed there. Henry chuckled.

The boy then, with a caper, sprang at the rope, clutched it, and went up hand over hand like a monkey. When he reached the top he vanished into thin air. Henry guffawed.

Soon the man, looking upwards with an anxious expression, began to hoot and holler after the boy. He called him down, he ordered him down, he begged him down, he began to swear

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and curse horribly. The boy, it seemed, took no notice at all. Henry roared.

Now the black, clapping his abominable great scimitar between his teeth, took hold of the rope himself, and went up it like a sailor. He, also, disappeared at the top. Henry's mirth increased.

Pretty soon some yelps and squeals were heard coming out of the empty air, and then a bloodcurdling scream. Down came a leg, thump on to the ground, then an arm, a thigh, a head, and other joints, and finally—no ladies being present—a bare backside, which struck the earth like a bomb. Henry went into fits.

Then the black came sliding down, holding on with one hand, fairly gibbering with excitement. He presented to Henry, with a salaam, his reeking blade for inspection. Henry rocked in his chair.

The black, seemingly overwhelmed with remorse, gathered up the fragments of his little stooge, lavishing a hundred lamentations and endearments upon each grisly member, and he stowed them all in the giant basket.

At that moment Henry, feeling the time had come for a showdown, and willing to bet a thousand to one they'd planted the whole compound full of mirrors before calling him out there, pulled out his revolver, and blazed away all six chambers in different directions, in the expectation of splintering at least one of those deceiving glasses.

Nothing of that sort happened, but the black, doing a quick pirouette in alarm, looked down in the dust at his feet, and held up a villainous little snake no thicker than a lead pencil which had been killed by one of Henry's stray bullets. He gave a gasp of relief, touched his turban very civilly, turned round again, and made a pass or two over the basket. At once, with a wriggle and a frisk, the boy sprang out, whole, alive, smiling, full of health and wickedness.

The black hastily hauled down the rope and came cringing up to Henry, overflowing with gratitude for having been saved from that villainous little snake, which was nothing more nor less than a krait—one nip and a man goes round and round like a catherine wheel for eleven seconds; then he is as dead as mutton.

"But for the heavenborn," said the black, "I should have been a goner, and my wicked little boy here, who is my pride and delight, must have lain dismembered in the basket till the sahib's servants condescended to throw him to the crocodiles. Our worthless lives, our scanty goods, are all at the sahib's disposal."

"That's all right," said Henry. "All I ask is, show me how

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the trick is worked, or the laugh will be on me from now on."

"Would not the sahib," said the black diffidently, "prefer the secret of a superb hair-restorer?"

"No. No," said Henry. "Nothing but the trick."

"I have," said the black, "the secret of a very peculiar tonic, which the sahib—not now, of course, but in later life—might find—"

"The trick," said Henry, "and without further delay."

"Very well," said the black. "Nothing in the world could be more simple. You make a pass, like that—"

"Wait a minute," said Henry. "Like that?"

"Exactly," said the black. "You then throw up the rope —so. You see? It sticks."

"So it does," said Henry.

"Any boy can climb," said the black. "Up, boy! Show the sahib."

The boy, smiling, climbed up and disappeared.

"Now," said the black, "if the sahib will excuse me, I shall be back immediately." And with that he climbed up himself, threw down the boy in sections, and speedily rejoined Henry on the ground.

"All that," said he, scooping up legs and arms as he spoke, "all that can be done by anyone. There is a little knack, however, to the pass I make at this juncture. If the sahib will deign to observe closely—like that."

"Like that?" said Henry.

"You have it to perfection," said the black.

"Very interesting," said Henry. "Tell me, what's up there at the top of the rope?"

"Ah, sahib," said the black with a smile, "that is something truly delightful."

With that he salaamed and departed, taking with him his rope, his giant basket, his tremendous great scimitar, and his wicked little boy. Henry was left feeling rather morose: he was known from the Deccan to the Khyber Pass as the man who laughed at the Indian Rope Trick, and now he could laugh no more.

He decided to keep very quiet about it, but this unfortunately was not enough. At tiffin, at chota peg, at the Club, on the Maidan, in the bazaar, and at polo, he was expected to laugh like a horse, and in India one has to do what is expected of one. Henry became extremely unpopular, cabals were formed against him, and soon he was hoofed out of the Service.

This was the more distressing as in the meantime he had married a wife, strong-featured, upstanding, well groomed,

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straight-eyed, a little peremptory in manner, and as jealous as a demon, but in all respects a memsahib of the highest type, who knew very well what was due to her. She told Henry he had better go to America and make a fortune. He agreed, they packed up, and off they went to America.

"I hope," said Henry, as they stood looking at the skyline of New York, "I hope I shall make that fortune."

"Of course," said she. "You must insist upon it."

"Very well, my dear," said he.

On landing, however, he discovered that all the fortunes had already been made, a discovery which very generally awaits those who visit America on this errand, and after some weeks of drifting about from place to place, he was prepared to cut his demand down to a mere job, then to a lesser job, and finally to the price of a meal and a bed for the night.

They reached this extremity in a certain small town in the Middle West. "There is nothing for it, my dear," said Henry. "We shall have to do the Indian Rope Trick."

His wife cried out very bitterly at the idea of a memsahib performing this native feat in a Middle Western town, before a Middle Western audience. She reproached him with the loss of his job, the poor quality of his manhood, with the time he let her little dog get run over on the bund, and with a glance he had cast at a Parsee maiden at Bombay. Nevertheless, reason and hunger prevailed; they pawned her last trinket, and invested in a rope, a roomy grip, and a monstrous old rusty scimitar they discovered in a junkshop.

When she saw this last, Henry's wife flatly refused to go on, unless she was given the star part and Henry took that of the stooge. "But," said Henry, drawing an apprehensive thumb down the notched and jagged edge of the grim and rusty bilbo. "But," said he, "you don't know how to make the passes."

"You shall teach me," she said, "and if anything goes wrong you will have only yourself to blame."

So Henry showed her. You may be sure he was very thorough in his instructions. In the end she mastered them perfectly, and there was nothing left to do but to stain themselves with coffee. Henry improvised a turban and loincloth; she wore a sari and a pair of ashtrays borrowed from the hotel. They sought out a convenient waste lot, a large crowd collected, and the show began.

Up went the rope. Sure enough, it stuck. The crowd, with a multiple snigger, whispered that everything was done by mirrors. Henry, not without a good deal of puffing, went up

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hand over hand. When he got to the top, he forgot the crowd, the act, his wife, and even himself, so surprised and delighted was he by the sight that met his eyes.

He found himself crawling out of something like a well, on to what seemed to be solid ground. The landscape about him was not at all like that below; it was like an Indian paradise, full of dells, bowers, scarlet ibises, and heaven knows what all. However, his surprise and delight came less from these features of the background than from the presence of a young female in the nearest of these bowers or arbours, which happened to be all wreathed, canopied, overgrown, and intertwined with passion flowers. This delightful creature, who was a positive houri, and very lightly attired, seemed to be expecting Henry, and greeted him with rapture.

Henry, who had a sufficiently affectionate nature, flung his arms round her neck and gazed deeply into her eyes. These were surprisingly eloquent. They seemed to say, "Why not make hey hey while the sun shines?"

He found the notion entirely agreeable, and planted a lingering kiss on her lips, noting only with a dim and careless annoyance that his wife was hooting and hollering from below. What person of any tact or delicacy, thought he, could hoot and holler at such a moment, and he dismissed her from his mind.

You may imagine his mortification when his delicious damsel suddenly repulsed him from her arms. He looked over his shoulder, and there was his wife, clambering over the edge, terribly red in the face, with the fury of a demon in her eye, and the mighty scimitar gripped firmly between her teeth.

Henry tried to rise, but she was beforehand with him, and while yet he had but his left foot on the ground, she caught him one across the loins with the huge and jagged bilbo, which effectually hamstrung him, so that he fell grovelling at her feet.

"For heaven's sake!" he cried. "It's all a trick. Part of the act. It means nothing. Remember our public. The show must go on."

"It shall," said she, striking at his arms and legs.

"Oh, those notches!" cried he. "To oblige me, my dear, please sharpen it a little upon a stone."

"It is good enough for you, you viper," said she, hacking away all the time. Pretty soon Henry was a limbless trunk.

"For the love of God," said he, "I hope you remember the passes. I can explain everything."

"To hell with the passes!" said she, and with a last swipe she sent his head rolling like a football.

She was not long in picking up the scattered fragments of

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poor Henry, and flinging them down to earth, amid the applause and laughter of the crowd, who were more than ever convinced it was all done by mirrors.

Then, gripping her scimitar, she was about to swarm down after him, not from any soft-hearted intention of reassembling her unfortunate spouse, but rather to have another hack or two at some of the larger joints.

At that moment she became aware of someone behind her, and, looking round, there was a divine young man, with the appearance of a Maharaja of the highest caste, an absolute Valentino, in whose eyes she seemed to read the words, " It is better to burn upon the Bed of Passion than in the Chair of Electricity."

This idea presented itself with an overwhelming appeal. She paused only to thrust her head through the aperture, and cry, " That's what happens to a pig of a man who betrays his wife with a beastly native," before hauling up the rope and entering into conversation with her charmer.

The police soon appeared upon the scene. There was nothing but a cooing sound above, as if invisible turtle doves were circling in amorous flight. Below, the various portions of Henry were scattered in the dust, and the bluebottle flies were already settling upon them.

The crowd explained it was nothing but a trick, done with mirrors.

" It looks to me," said the sergeant, " as if the biggest one must have splintered right on top of him."

"Ahmed, darling, I fear that we cannot keep meeting in secret like this much longer."

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Serenade for Strings

I took my harp to the party. . .

Her white throat and arms were bare, she leaned forward a little and swayed with the melody, her eyes fast on the clouds above her, her lips parted, a pink tinge of exercise in her cheeks as she drew her bow. She played as only a peculiar chain of circumstances puts it in the power of a very few to play. All nature had grown still, the violin sobbed, sang, danced and quavered on alone . . .

At the doorway a white-faced woman bore it as long as she could and then fell senseless.

GENE STRATTON PORTER, *A Girl of the Limberlost*

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney,
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,
My brother in Moharabuiee . . .

When we come at the end of time
To Peter sitting in state,
He will smile on the three old spirits,
But call me first through the gate . . .

And when the folk there spy me,
They will all come up to me
With "Here is the fiddler of Dooney!"
And dance like a wave of the sea.

W. B. YEATS, *The Fiddler of Dooney*

Harping on the Subject

"Can you tell me," he went on, "if there's any young lady about here with auburn hair? Father plays the fiddle."

"Young lady!" repeated the landlord. "Hawburn? No, there's no lady that colour hereabouts . . ."

"The one I'm looking for's young—young as a kitten, and as troublesome."

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Hazel clapped her hands to her mouth.

"There's no fiddler chap hereabouts, then?"

Abel rose and went to the door.

"If it's music you want, I know better music than fiddles, and that's harps," he said. "Saw! saw! The only time as ever I liked a fiddle was when the fellow stabbed at the strings with his ten fingers—despert-like."

"Oh, damn you!" said Reddin. "I didn't come to hear about harps . . ."

In another moment he was gone.

"Whoever she be," said the publican, nodding his large head wisely, "have her he will, for certain sure."

MARY WEBB, *Gone to Earth*

Harps of Fame

Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe
That souned bothe wel and sharpe,
Orpheus ful craftely,
And on his syde, faste by
Sat the harper Orion
And Eacides Chiron,
And other harpers many oon,
And the Bret Glascurion;
And smal harpers with her glees
Seten under hem in sees.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *The House of Fame*

Heavenly Triangle

Camille was a fair romantic girl of nineteen, who played the harp. Etienne was a dark romantic boy of twenty-one, who wrote poetry. The sequel was inevitable . . .

Berthe reflected, appreciating the picture, yet with a tang of humorous contempt in her appreciation, that it was only blondes who played the harp: "When one is brunette, you know, one has need of something infinitely more *mondaine*!"

The big harp was so balanced that it rested only very lightly on the shoulder of the player seated on a stool beside it, but gave a pathetic impression that the frail figure was bearing the entire weight. The top of the harp waved like a golden serpent; with her decorative golden head forming one corner, the girl's figure was welded into the whole triangular design. It was all very pretty, very heavenly and sexless, the strings slanting like silver rain behind Camille's white dress . . .

G. B. STERN, *Mosaic*

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Airs on the Pavement

The tune was now much louder: in a moment she would be abreast of it—a street musician, no doubt . . . She raised her umbrella as high as she could reach, so as to avoid the musician on the one side and a passer-by on the other, and in doing so she looked straight into the face of Mr. Tucker himself . . .

In the brief flash of their meeting glances she had seen horrified recognition in his eyes. What a problem! This was one of those rare occasions when " one's savoir faire, so to speak," is at a loss.

Ah, he was coming after her. He had shut his violin into its case, and was hurrying after her. She smiled as he came up to her. " I recognised you by the chef d'oeuvre, Mr. Tucker," she said pleasantly. " I was just making for a 15 bus . . . "

He drew himself up. " Well, I'll . . . er . . . ! "

He made a gesture signifying that he would now resume his profession.

" And *do* try to keep dry, Mr. Tucker," said Miss Cribb. " We artists so easily catch cold. Good-bye! After supper, if you feel like it, we'll have a little music."

MARTIN ARMSTRONG, *Mr. Tucker and Miss Cribb*

A Hundred Harps

King David was a sorrowful man:
No cause for his sorrow had he;
And he called for the music of a hundred harps,
To ease his melancholy.

They played till they all fell silent:
Played—and play sweet did they;
But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King David
They could not charm away . . .

WALTER DE LA MARE, *King David*

Weather-beaten Strings

I loathe gramophones, they are all wrong for those evenings, and we have the piano instead, and if there is an itinerant harpist in the square, James brings him in, and the difference that golden strings, however weather-beaten, make to any dance is unbelievable.

RACHEL FERGUSON, *A Harp in Lowndes Square*

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ON SLAY DOWN

MICHAEL GILBERT

"THE young man of today," said Mr. Behrens, "is physically stronger and fitter than his father. He can run a mile quicker—"

"A useful accomplishment," agreed Mr. Calder.

"He can putt a weight farther, can jump higher, and will probably live longer."

"Not as long as the young lady of today," said Mr. Calder. "*They* have a look of awful vitality."

"Nevertheless," said Mr. Behrens—he and Mr. Calder, being very old friends, did not so much answer as override each other; frequently they both spoke at once—"nevertheless he is, in one important way, inferior to the older generation. He is mentally softer—"

"Morally, too."

"The two things go together. He has the weaknesses which go with his strength. He is tolerant—but he is flabby. He is intelligent—but he is timid. He is made out of cast iron, not steel."

"Stop generalising," said Mr. Calder. "What's worrying you?"

"The future of our service," said Mr. Behrens.

Mr. Calder considered the matter, at the same time softly scratching the head of his deerhound, Rasselas, who lay on the carpet beside his chair.

Mr. Behrens, who lived down in the

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valley, had walked up, as he did regularly on Tuesday afternoons, to take tea with Mr. Calder in his cottage on the hilltop.

"You're not often right," said Mr. Calder, at last.

"Thank you."

"You could be on this occasion. I saw Fortescue yesterday."

"Yes," said Mr. Behrens. "He told me you had been to see him. I meant to ask you about that. What did he want?"

"There's a woman. She has to be killed."

Rasselas flicked his right ear at an intrusive fly; then, when this proved ineffective, growled softly and shook his head.

"Anyone I know?" said Mr. Behrens.

"I'm not sure. Her name, at the moment, is Lipper—Maria Lipper. She lives in Woking and is known there as Mrs. Lipper, although I don't *think* she has ever been married. She has worked as a typist and filing clerk at the Air Ministry since—oh, since well before the last war."

Both Mr. Behrens and Mr. Calder spoke of the "last war" in terms of very slight derogation. It had not been *their* war.

"And how long has she been working for them?"

"Certainly for ten years, possibly more. Security got on to her in the end by selective coding, and that, as you know, is a very slow process."

"And not one which a jury would understand or accept."

"Oh, certainly not," said Mr. Calder. "Certainly not. There could be no question here of judicial process. Maria is a season ticket holder, not a commuter."

By this Mr. Calder meant that Maria Lipper was an agent who collected, piecemeal, all information which came her way, and passed it on at long intervals of months or even years. No messengers came to her. When she had sufficient to interest her masters, she would take it to a collecting point and leave it. Occasional sums of money would come to her through the post.

"It is a thousand pities," added Mr. Calder, "that they did not get on to her a little sooner—before Operation Prometheus Unbound came off the drawing board."

"Do you think she knows about *that*?"

"I'm afraid so," said Mr. Calder. "I wasn't directly concerned. Buchanan was in charge. But it was her section that did the Prometheus typing, and when he found out that she had asked for an urgent contact, I think—I really think—he was justified in getting worried."

"What is he going to do about it?"

"The contact has been short-circuited. I am taking his place. Two days from now Mrs. Lipper is driving down to Portsmouth for a short holiday. She plans to leave Woking very

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early—she likes clear roads to drive on—and she will be crossing Salisbury Plain at six o'clock. Outside Upavon she turns off the main road. The meeting place is a barn at the top of the track. She has stipulated for a payment of five hundred pounds in one-pound notes. Incidentally, she has never, before, been paid more than fifty."

"You must be right," said Mr. Behrens. "I imagine that I am to cover you here. Fortunately my aunt is taking the waters at Harrogate."

"If you would."

"The same arrangements as usual."

"The key will be on the ledge over the woodshed door."

"You'd better warn Rasselas to expect me. Last time he got it into his head that I was a burglar."

The great hound looked up at the mention of his name and grinned, showing his long white incisors.

"You needn't worry about Rasselas," said Mr. Calder. "I'll take him with me. He enjoys an expedition. All the same, it *is* a sad commentary on the younger generation that a man of my age has to be sent out on a trip like this."

"Exactly what I was saying. Where did you put the backgammon board?"

Mr. Calder left his cottage at dusk on the following evening. He drove off in the direction of Gravesend, crossed the river by the ferry, and made a circle round London, recrossing the Thames at Reading. He drove his inconspicuous car easily and efficiently. Rasselas lay across the back seat, between a sleeping-bag and a portmanteau. He was used to road travel, and slept most of the way.

At midnight the car rolled down the broad High Street of Marlborough and out on to the Pewsey Road. A soft, golden moon made a mockery of its headlights.

A mile from Upavon, Mr. Calder pulled up at the side of the road, and studied the 1/25,000 range map with which he had been supplied. The track leading to the barn was clearly shown. But he had marked a different, and roundabout way by which the rendezvous could be approached. This involved taking the next road to the right, following it for a quarter of a mile, then finding a field track—it was no more than a dotted line even on his large-scale map—which would take him up a small re-entrant. The track appeared to stop just short of the circular contour which marked the top of the down. Across it, as Mr. Calder had seen when he examined the map, ran, in straggling gothic lettering, the words Slay Down.

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The entrance to the track had been shut off by a gate, and was indistinguishable from the entrance to a field. The gate was padlocked, too, but Mr. Calder dealt with this by lifting it off its hinges. It was a heavy gate, but he shifted it with little apparent effort. There were surprising reserves of strength in his barrel-shaped body, thick arms, and plump hands.

After a month of fine weather the track, though rutted, was rock hard. Mr. Calder ran up it until the banks on either side had levelled out and he guessed that he was approaching the top of the rise. There he backed his car into a thicket. For the last part of the journey he had been travelling without lights.

Now he switched off the engine, opened the car door, and sat listening.

At first the silence seemed complete. Then, as the singing of the engine died in his ears, the sounds of the night reasserted themselves. A nightjar screamed; an owl hooted. The creatures of the dark, momentarily frozen by the arrival among them of this great palpitating steel-and-glass animal, started to move again. A mile away across the valley, where farms stood and people lived, a dog barked.

Mr. Calder took his sleeping-bag out of the back of the car and unrolled it. He took off his coat and shoes, loosened his tie, and wriggled down into the bag. Rasselas lay down too, his nose a few inches from Mr. Calder's head.

In five minutes the man was asleep. When he woke he knew what had roused him. Rasselas had growled, very softly, a little rumbling, grumbling noise which meant that something had disturbed him. It was not the growl of imminent danger. It was a tentative alert.

Mr. Calder raised his head. During the time he had been asleep the wind had risen a little, and was blowing up dark clouds and sending them scudding across the face of the moon; the shadows on the bare down were horsemen, warriors with horned helmets riding horses with flying manes and tails. Rasselas was following them with his eyes, head cocked. It was as if, behind the piping of the wind, he could hear, pitched too high for human ears, the shrill note of a trumpet.

"They're ghosts," said Mr. Calder calmly. "They won't hurt us." He lay down, and was soon asleep again.

It was five o'clock, and light was coming back into the sky when he woke. It took him five minutes to dress himself and roll up his sleeping-bag. His movements seemed unhurried, but he lost no time.

From the back of the car he took a Greener .25 calibre rifle,

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and clipped on a telescopic sight, which he took from a leather case. A handful of nickel-capped ammunition went into his jacket pocket. Tucking the rifle under his arm, he walked cautiously towards the brow of the hill. From the brow, a long, thin line of trees, based in scrub, led down to the barn, whose red-brown roof could now just be seen over the convex slope of the hill.

Mr. Calder thought that the arrangement was excellent. "Made to measure," was the expression he used. The scrub was thickest round the end tree of the windbreak, and here he propped up the rifle, and then walked the remaining distance to the wall of the barn. He noted that the distance was thirty-three yards.

In front of the barn the path, coming up from the main road, opened out into a flat space, originally a cattle yard, but now missing one wall.

She'll drive in here, thought Mr. Calder. And she'll turn the car, ready to get away. They always do that. After a bit, she'll get out of the car and she'll stand, watching for me to come up the road.

When he got level with the barn he saw something that was not marked on the map. It was another track, which came across the down, and had been made quite recently by Army vehicles from the Gunnery School. A litter of ammunition boxes, empty cigarette cartons, and a rusty brew can suggested that the Army had taken over the barn as a staging point for their manœuvres. It was an additional fact. Something to be noted. Mr. Calder didn't think that it affected his plans. A civilian car, coming from the road, would be most unlikely to take this track, a rough affair seamed with the marks of Bren carriers and light tanks.

Mr. Calder returned to the end of the trees, and spent some minutes piling a few large stones and a log into a small breast-work. He picked up the rifle and set the sights carefully to thirty-five yards. Then he sat down, with his back to the tree, and lit a cigarette. Rasselas lay down beside him.

Mrs. Lipper arrived at ten to six.

She drove up the track from the road, and Mr. Calder was interested to see that she behaved almost exactly as he had predicted. She drove her car into the yard, switched off the engine, and sat for a few minutes. Then she opened the car door and got out.

Mr. Calder snuggled down behind the barrier, moved his rifle forward a little, and centred the sight on Mrs. Lipper's left breast.

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It was at this moment that he heard the truck coming. It was, he thought, a fifteen-hundredweight truck, and it was coming quite slowly along the rough track towards the barn.

Mr. Calder laid down the rifle and rose to his knees. The truck engine had stopped. From his position of vantage he could see, although Mrs. Lipper could not, a figure in battledress getting out of the truck. It was, he thought, an officer. He was carrying a light rifle, and it was clear that he was after rabbits. Indeed, as Mr. Calder watched, the young man raised his rifle, then lowered it again.

Mr. Calder was interested, even in the middle of his extreme irritation, to see that the officer had aimed at a thicket almost directly in line with the barn.

Three minutes passed in silence. Mrs. Lipper looked twice at her watch. Mr. Calder lay down again in a firing position. He had decided to wait. It was a close decision, but he was used to making close decisions, and he felt certain that this one was right.

The hidden rifle spoke; and Mr. Calder squeezed the trigger of his own. So rapid was his reaction that it sounded like a shot and an echo. In front of his eyes, Mrs. Lipper folded on to the ground. She did not fall. It was quite a different movement. It was as though a puppet-master, who had previously held the strings taut, had let them drop and a puppet had tumbled to the ground, arms, legs, and head disjointed.

A moment later the hidden rifle spoke again. Mr. Calder smiled to himself. The timing, he thought, had been perfect. He was quietly packing away the telescopic sight, dismantling the small redoubt he had created, and obliterating all signs of his presence. Five minutes later he was back in his car. He had left it facing outwards and downhill, and all he had to do was take off the handbrake, and start rolling down the track. This was the trickiest moment in the whole operation. It took three minutes to lift the gate, drive the car through, and replace the gate. During the whole of that time no one appeared on the road in either direction.

"And that," said Mr. Calder, some three days later to Mr. Fortescue, "was that." Mr. Fortescue was a square, sagacious-looking man, and was manager of the Westminster branch of the London and Home Counties Bank. No one seeing Mr. Fortescue would have mistaken him for anything but a bank manager; although, in fact, he had certain other, quite important functions.

"I was sorry, in a way, to saddle the boy with it, but I hadn't any choice."

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"He took your shot as the echo of his?"

"Apparently. Anyway, he went on shooting."

"You contemplated that he would find the body—either then, or later."

"Certainly."

"And would assume that he had been responsible—accidentally, of course."

"I think that he should receive a good deal of sympathy. He had a perfect right to shoot rabbits. The rough shooting belongs to the School of Artillery. The woman was trespassing on War Department Property. Indeed, the police will be in some difficulty in concluding why she was there at all."

"I expect they would have been," said Mr. Fortescue, "if her body had been discovered."

Mr. Calder looked at him.

"You mean," he said at last, "that no one has been near the barn in the last four days?"

"On the contrary. One of the Troops of the Seventeenth Field Regiment, to which your intrusive Subaltern belongs, visited the barn two days later. It was their gun position. The barn itself was the troop command post."

"Either," said Mr. Calder, "they were very unobservant soldiers, or one is driven to the conclusion that the body had been moved."

"I was able," said Mr. Fortescue, "through my influence with the Army, to attend the firing as an additional umpire, in uniform. I had plenty of time on my hands, and was able to make a thorough search of the area."

"I see," said Mr. Calder. "Yes. It opens up an interesting field of speculation, doesn't it?"

"Very interesting," said Mr. Fortescue. "In—er—one or two different directions."

"Have you discovered the name of the officer who was out shooting?"

"He is a National Service boy. A Lieutenant Blaikie. He is in temporary command of C Troop of A Battery—it would normally be a Captain, but they are short of officers. His Colonel thinks very highly of him. He says that he is a boy of great initiative."

"There I agree with you," said Mr. Calder. "I wonder if the Army could find *me* a suit of battledress."

"I see you as a Major," said Mr. Fortescue. "With a 1918 Victory Medal and a 1939 Defence Medal."

"The Africa Star," said Mr. Calder, firmly. . .

Approximately a week later Mr. Calder, wearing a Service

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Dress hat half a size too large for him and a battledress blouse which met with some difficulty round the waist, was walking up the path which led to the barn. It was ten o'clock, dusk had just fallen, and around the farm there was a scene of considerable activity as C Troop, A Battery, of the Seventeenth Field Regiment settled down for the night.

Four guns were in position, two in front of and two behind the barn. The gun teams were digging slit trenches. Two storm lanterns hung in the barn. A sentry on the path saluted Mr. Calder, who inquired where he would find the Troop Commander.

"He's got his bivvy up there, sir," said the sentry.

Peering through the dusk Mr. Calder saw a truck parked on a flat space, beyond the barn, and enclosed by scattered bushes. Attached to the back of the truck, and forming an extension of it, was a sheet of canvas, pegged down in the form of a tent. He circled the site cautiously.

It seemed to him to be just the right distance from the barn, and to have the right amount of cover. It was the place he would have chosen himself.

He edged up to the opening of the tent, and peered inside. A young Subaltern was seated on his bedroll, examining a map. His webbing equipment was hanging on a hook on the back of the truck.

Mr. Calder stooped and entered. The young man frowned, drawing his thick eyebrows together; then recognised Mr. Calder, and smiled.

"You're one of our umpires, aren't you, sir," he said. "Come in."

"Thank you," said Mr. Calder. "Can I squat on the bedroll?"

"I expect you've been round the gun position, sir. I was a bit uncertain about the A.A. defences myself. I've put the sentry on top of Slay Down. He's a bit out of touch."

"I must confess," said Mr. Calder, "that I haven't examined your dispositions. It was something—rather more personal I wanted a little chat about."

"Yes, sir?"

"When you buried her—" Mr. Calder scraped the turf with his heel—"how deep did you put her?"

There was silence in the tiny tent, lit by a single bulb from the dashboard of the truck. The two men might have been on a raft, alone, in the middle of the ocean.

The thing which occurred next did not surprise Mr. Calder.

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Lieutenant Blaikie's right hand made a very slight movement outwards, checked, and fell to his side again.

"Four foot, into the chalk," he said.

"How long did it take you?"

"Two hours."

"Quick work," said Mr. Calder. "It must have been a shock to you, when a night exercise was ordered exactly on this spot, with special emphasis on the digging of slit trenches and gun-pits."

"It would have worried me more if I hadn't been in command of the exercise," said Lieutenant Blaikie. "I reckoned if I pitched my own tent exactly here, no one would dig a trench or a gun-pit inside it. By the way—who are you?"

Mr. Calder was particularly pleased to notice that Lieutenant Blaikie's voice was under firm control.

He told him who he was; and made a proposal to him.

"He was due out of the Army in a couple of months' time," said Mr. Calder to Mr. Behrens, when the latter came up for a game of backgammon. "Fortescue saw him, and thought him very promising. I was very pleased with his behaviour in the tent that night. When I sprung it on him, his first reaction was to reach for the revolver in his webbing holster. It was hanging on the back of his truck. He realised that he wouldn't be able to get it out in time, and decided to come clean. I think that showed decision, and balance, don't you?"

"Decision and balance are *most* important," agreed Mr. Behrens. "Your throw."

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Eggsactly

All I know about cooking is how to boil an egg and I can give you the recipe for this.

Take a saucepan and fill it with water, warm if possible so that it does not take quite so long to come to the boil, as it would if it were cold. Now get an egg, preferably a fresh one, and put it into the water at the same time trying to avoid scalding your fingers. I forgot to say that the water must be boiling before you insert the egg. One way I have found of putting in the egg without burning my fingers and without cracking the shell is to put it in with a spoon. Leave it in the boiling water for a few minutes. You can never tell whether it's going to be too soft or too hard. This is one of the many mysteries of cooking.

JOHN BETJEMAN, *Celebrity Cooking for You*

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ISLE OF CAPRI

By LUDWIG BEMELMANS

HERE is a simple recipe for understanding the conformation of the island of Capri: place on the table before you, to the left, an ordinary coffee cup turned upside down; to its right place an oversized coffee cup, also inverted, and preferably with a chipped lip, towards you. Put a matchbox between the two cups, move the three objects close together and drape a pale green handkerchief over the lot—and that is roughly Capri. You're looking at it now as you approach it from the north—from Naples. The small cup is Mount Tiberio (1,096 feet), the large cup is Mount Solaro (1,920 feet), and in the valley between, atop the matchbox, is the town of Capri.

Rest a match end up on the table, leaning against the box, and now you have the funicular that takes you down to the Marina Grande, the large port; at approximately the same spot on the other side of the island is the Marina Piccola, the small port without benefit of funicular. On that side you can drape two limp strands of spaghetti to simulate the roads that lead from Capri down to the water. Loop one piece in generous serpentine turns—that's the one travelled by buses. Arrange the other in tight zigzags; it is the Via Krupp, a gift of the late munitions manufacturer. If you can expend two more pieces of spaghetti—a long one from Capri up to Anacapri, on the big cup, and another down to the Marina Grande, you will have just about all the roads.

A path leads to the top of the small cup, where the ruins of the magnificent Villa Jove are located. Like the houses of the great in Pompeii, it was most restrained and simple. By comparison, for example, with Versailles, or with Mr. Hearst's palatial San

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Born an Austrian, married to an American, with a daughter more American, he maintains, than George Washington, Ludwig Bemelmans solemnly admits to being the foreigner in the family.

Brilliant satirist, cartoonist, conversationalist and painter—at a New York exhibition he sold all sixty of his exhibits—he's an insatiable traveller and one of the world's great gourmets. Ever since he worked his way as a waiter through the cream of New York's restaurants, food has been one of the loves of his life.

Cruelty he hates and once refused a role offered him by John Huston who was filming in Japan, when he read the script and discovered it was a war story. Seated in a Paris restaurant deep in melancholy, he finished his bottle of champagne and called for a piece of paper. Borrowing a lipstick, he scrawled the message, "No, John, No," sealed it in the bottle and addressed it to John Huston, Japan . . .

Simeon in California, it was merely a weekend bungalow. The fine pagan mood of this great ruin is marred by a badly sculptured modern Madonna, planted in the middle of it so that you seldom escape the clash of mediocre ecclesiastic art with the purity of the classic.

Such clashes offend you again and again in Italy, and this is difficult to explain. For, with all the great models in front of them, and the blood of the best painters and sculptors in their veins, the Italians recently have produced very little in the way of good art.

There is the Blue Grotto, represented by the chipped place on the big cup; it also is decorated with an abominably executed Madonna that occupies a niche over the entrance. The roof of this tunnel is so low that you enter it sitting on the bottom of a small rowing-boat; even so, you have to duck while the boatman takes you in by pulling on a chain. The Blue Grotto is all that you have heard of it. The renditions of it that one finds on cheap souvenir paintings all over Capri come closest to the truth, and particularly accurate is the light effect on the top and the sidewalls. The local artists treat it as if they were showing a cavern with luminous, bluish worms crawling up the walls and across the vaulted ceiling.

On top of the smaller of the two coffee cups, on a rocky promontory that rises above Capri, is a villa with a sweeping view of the Mediterranean on both sides of the island. It is owned by Prince Gaetano Parente, who has the long legs to negotiate several times a day the two-hundred-odd stone steps by which the villa is reached. He is never without a small dog, a breed

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peculiar to the island and, like its population, of the most varied nomenclature.

"Without inflicting on you the tyranny of dates and too many names," said Gaetano Parente, "I will give you the briefest kind of history of Capri." We were walking down the Via Krupp. That is, he was walking—I ran.

"Almost everyone who has written a book here has taken something from a volume called *Ricerche Storiche sull' Isola di Capri*, by Rosario Mangoni. I recommend it to you, and also one called *The Book of Capri*, by Harold E. Trower, onetime British consul here. One cannot write about Italy without quoting from one book or another, or from inscriptions on ancient metals, stones, wood, canvases, or tapestries that are in evidence everywhere.

"The story goes something like this: the Emperor Augustus saw Capri's possibilities, and it was he, not Tiberius, who built it up. Tiberius came later and improved it, making of it for a while a rest place and camp for soldiers of the Roman Empire. His name is more in evidence here today than that of Augustus.

"After Tiberius, Capri for a few hundred years was left to solitude. I'll spare you history here and we will move up to when it was rediscovered as a pleasure place, by Germans, of all people, who at the time headed a spiritual back-to-nature movement. They came here, shouted 'Wunderbar,' and walked about naked carrying their children on both shoulders. They lived on fruits and vegetables, picked wild flowers and named butterflies that until then had never been properly catalogued.

"After these blond nudists, the English arrived—the Oxford boys, the Shelley and Keats group, and they were very impressed by the fine physiques of the native fishermen. Those romantic boys did a lot for Capri, constantly singing its praises. They never tired of adoring this happy, brown people and, strangely enough, the propaganda brought on a great horde of British spinsters. There was no harbour then, and the good ladies were carried ashore in the strong arms of the picturesque natives. Then came other English breeds, noblemen, industrialists, and archaeologists who bought the best statuary and shipped it to the British Museum.

"Now Capri was really famous. The kings came and the Russian grand dukes; the Kaiser visited on his yacht. All the world came—the old rich, the nouveaux riches, and tycoons like Krupp and Axel Wenner-Gren; also Stalin, and even Trotsky.

"Of all the things that have gone on here you find the remnants not only in the earth but also in the faces about you.

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Giovanni is a fisherman at the Marina Grande—his face is out of the senate chambers of Rome in the time of Augustus. Put a toga on the fat chauffeur that drives the Anacapri bus, and you have Nero. Look at the man coming out of the Restaurant Hidigeigei every day after lunch; he wears his beard like Franz Josef of Hapsburg.

"It's all preserved here as in an album, including some of the English who still adore the native fishermen.

With that much history we had arrived at a restaurant where, in a neat little kitchen, a simple and very reasonable meal was prepared. The curious regulations of the island forbid the sale of wine here, and in consequence it's the one place where one can't have spaghetti. To serve spaghetti one must serve wine, and this, constituting a proper Italian restaurant, demands a restaurant licence. The woman who runs the little inn has no licence, and so the place is called a tea-room. This small establishment, named the Pension Weber, is at Marina Piccola and overlooks a beach and rows of little bathing huts. The son of the proprietress waited at table, but he was not too gay, having been called up from the beach to help out.

A sunburnt man with the small gold medal of the Madonna hanging from his neck was telling a woman who sat at his table that he had come to Capri to look around for a villa.

Gaetano Parente said to me, "Here is the most important thing to know about Capri: never say to anybody that you want to buy a villa. I will tell you all about villas.

"Everybody, from a priest in the biggest church in Capri down to the last fisherman on the Punta Tragara and also the gatekeeper of the ruins of the Villa Jove, is a real estate agent. Each is a poet, and mostly they 'sell' places that exist only in their imaginations. Of course, most people who ask about villas don't want to buy them anyway, so it's just a Capri pastime.

"Let us assume you really decide to buy something—almost everything is for sale. You find the villa you like, knock on the door and ask the owner what he wants for it. 'The owner says, 'I want ten million lire.' Not being an Italian, you say, 'Good,' and you go to the bank and come back with the money. Now he says, 'Ah, my wife (or my cousin, or my father) who owns half of this house, will not sell for this price.' 'Good,' you say—'how much then?' 'Twelve million,' he says. You bring the additional two million. Now he remembers that a grandchild, of whom he is the guardian, has an interest, and he cannot cheat the little one—he did not think about this before. 'Let's make it fifteen million and not talk any more,' he says.

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"Now you go and bring the rest of the money and you think that finally the villa, at fifteen million lire, is yours.

"But there are other things—a relative who is a lawyer appears, and he speaks about a small commission due him. Then he tells you that the garden has to be bought and—another thing overlooked—in the attic lives the grandmother of the owner. She's so good and sweet, and she goes with the villa; you can of course make some other arrangements for her. Also, this lawyer draws you into a corner and whispers to you that you can't possibly want this peasant hut to live in. 'I will show you a villa,' he mutters, and describes a place like the Alhambra. By the time you have it, the usual villa comes to something like sixteen million lire (or up to about £10,000). Now I will tell you of the servants, but that part is pure joy.

"The servants are the best part of the villa. Born with shrewdness and skill as are all Italians, they don't speak Italian at all, but a Neapolitan dialect. Yet they manage to understand English, French, German, Czech, or Swedish; other languages, like Hindustani or Arabic, they understand by merely looking intently at the speaker and reading his mind. They are very clean and they give you every comfort; they live only for you. They want to satisfy every one of your wishes. If one night you come home a little unsteady and gay and ask them for the moon, they will bring it to you, or else they will improvise something that is as good.

"The first party you give at your villa is very important to them; they watch everything closely. They want to see how you pour whisky, how fast the bottles of champagne are opened, what kind of flowers you order for your house, what tips you give to messengers, what orders you issue for food. From all this they determine exactly how much to steal. They do this so nicely that you don't mind it at all. The salaries they get are ridiculous, but of no great importance—what makes them happy is to cheat a little on the macaroni, to move a bottle of wine from your side of the cellar to theirs.

"I forgot to tell you that among villas here you have the most extraordinary assortment to choose from. This isle has always attracted remarkable people, and so you may find yourself owning a place completely Chinese, including the opium pipes with which the last owner smoked himself to death. Or you may find a small castle with stone bulwarks and cannons; you may become the owner of a house whose builder was devoted to Mayan culture, tiger hunting, deep-sea fishing, or the collection of ancient timepieces. If your house lacks decoration, take a shovel and dig in your garden . . . I came up with the jaw of a

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prehistoric animal and a bas-relief the first day. Now I have decorated one whole wall of my studio with the things I dug up. Some are so very interesting—well, I cannot show them to everyone."

I was most grateful to Prince Gaetano Parente. Actually, I didn't want to buy a villa, but I rented one. Its name was lettered on a piece of tile at the gate, together with a picture of the owner. It was something like La Balalaika. The house was nice, but the name didn't go with either the place or the island, and I couldn't remember it, so I changed it to Jovina, meaning the Little Villa Jove.

I have a preference for irregularity in houses and Jovina was just right. It stood hidden by olive trees extending halfway down to the sea and was bordered by little vineyards and an immense terrace which afforded a wonderful view. At the right of it rose the wall of Mount Solaro, beyond the top of which the sun passed at about four o'clock, leaving the terrace in pleasant shade for the rest of the day. The view included the Faraglioni —three rocks that jut out of the water off Punta Tragara—the Marina Piccola, and the sea. Best of all, the place was completely lost, yet only a few minutes' shaded walk from the town of Capri. The rent was forty-five pounds a month, plus the food for four cats.

"How about the cats?" I said to the landlady on taking over.

"The cats go with the villa," she said, "and also Antonia."

Antonia was seventeen; she arrived at seven in the morning, left at nine at night, and got a salary of a pound a month. Her first job was to pump water from the cistern below the villa up into a tank on the roof. This she did for three-quarters of an hour every morning, singing in Neapolitan.

Lithe and quick as the salamanders in the garden, she leapt to a boulder and up on the roof several times during the pumping to check the amount of water, always smiling. Next she lit the charcoal oven and with a small fan got the fire going. She was transported when her salary was trebled and her hours cut in half. My guests were her guests—whatever concerned me became her worry or joy.

One morning I climbed up on the roof with an empty bottle and a long piece of string. I tied one end of the string round the bottle, which I floated in the water tank. Then I lowered the other end of the string, with a mule shoe tied to it, down the side of the house. Next, I marked a scale on the wall, so that Antonia could read the water level in the tank without jumping up on the roof. This invention raised her esteem to delirium, and all the water girls of the neighbourhood were

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called. They came running barefoot and, shy as doves, appeared from the shadows of the olive trees. "He, my signore, did it," said Antonia, pointing with pride at me and at the indicator of our water tank.

Whenever she saw me anywhere in Capri, she would run to me and walk by my side a while; or if she were in a hurry, she'd wave. She was always neat and, in addition, she had humour.

My mother came to visit me and, realising the utter remoteness of the place, she said, "My God, don't leave me alone in this house at night—somebody could easily murder me."

Therefore on one occasion I said to Antonia, "Will you sleep here tonight?"

And she said, "Yes, signore, but I think I better ask my mamma."

So I said, "Tell her that my mamma is afraid at night, and I am going out tonight and that's why I want you to stay with her."

She smiled—and said sweetly, "Oh, for that—I don't have to ask."

A family renting a villa like Jovina, shopping in the markets and doing its own cooking, can live well now in Capri on not much more than thirty-five pounds a month. I know a couple of Swedes with healthy appetites who lived in comfort in Anacapri for twenty-five pounds a month.

When I took over the Villa Jovina, the landlady presented me with a twenty-page inventory which carefully listed every broken cup and saucer, a broom that looked like an abused polo mallet, and even a dishrag. A lawyer came on her behalf. Everything was checked over when I moved in and again when I departed. And in the meantime the landlady herself lived in a grotto under the house.

She emerged early every morning and went down to the gate where, with a wild yell and a rending sound such as is heard when a doctor rips adhesive tape from a wrenched shoulder, she tore off the sign *Villa Jovina*. Right after breakfast—and without a word from me—Antonia always brought me a new piece of cardboard, Indian ink, and brush and, standing by, she watched me paint the day's new sign. She held it in the sun to dry and then, running down the stairs, singing all the while, she attached it to the tile with new strips of adhesive tape. I painted the sign sixty times in all, staying there that many days.

The four cats were fat when I left in spite of the eleven members of Antonia's family, who got half the meat and fish bought for the cats. There was also a little graft with the iceman. Otherwise, Antonia was scrupulously honest.

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The Piazza, the centre of the social life of Capri, is a stage on which movement, sound, and lighting seem to be manipulated by a director of untiring invention. The audience sits on the set; the set is on many levels. There is a complicated and interesting white church, reminiscent of the Cathedral in Quito, Ecuador. It is the only church I have ever seen in the basement of which is a bar and café. There are vaulted exits and entrances to the Piazza, and an open break at one side offers the cyclorama of the Bay of Naples.

There, forming one side of that opening, stands a square clock tower with a set of bells that bongs every few minutes with such insistence that the glasses on the tables begin to dance and tinkle, and people cover their ears. At the base of the tower is a police station the size of a telephone booth, and a news-stand where you can buy American magazines and comic books, the latter translated into Italian. Superman here is called La Battaglia di Orson. At about noon you could also see Orson Welles walking across the Piazza.

The centre of the Piazza is crammed with the varicoloured pavement tables of four competing restaurants and the tight-fitting, shapeless wicker chairs that belong to them. The greatest activity in the Piazza is towards seven in the evening.

There are many people in Capri who, in less romantic and non-Italian regions, would find themselves in strait jackets and not permitted to walk about without attendants close by. There are among this group several outstanding and amusing ones. One little man, a retired civil servant from Naples, has a suit with electric bulbs for buttons connected to a battery in his coat pocket. On high holidays he stands in the centre of the Piazza where from time to time and with great seriousness he lights himself up. There is a poet who lives at the Marina Piccola and writes an odè on the soles of his shoes every morning. Then, walking up to the Piazza, he eradicates the daily inspiration in the sand of the road.

Towards nine, various members of the sleeping-pill set and the narcotic squad march in. They are of mixed nationality and include several Americans. They are starry-eyed and dressed as for an elegant masquerade, the men in black or wine-coloured velvet slacks, golden sandals, rings the size of match-boxes, and lavalieres hanging on bronzed chests. The women are exquisitely gowned.

I heard much talk of their orgies, and attended several of them. Whatever happened there that was awful must have taken place inside their heads, for I never saw any of them behave badly.

One had the face of a saint in perpetual ecstasy; many of

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them appeared to float past me and disappear. They remained alert all through the night and seemed to enjoy especially the early morning hours. Since they were all extremely young, there was as yet no evidence of punishment in their faces. Next day they were as radiant in the sea as on the ballroom floor.

The natives who labour pass through the Piazza constantly. Mostly they are like a troupe of acrobats accompanying their equipment into a circus ring. Silently, on bare feet or straw-soled canvas shoes, they move along with dignity and grace. Two pull a small wagon while two walk behind with ropes with which to hold back the wagon on the sharp declines of the narrow streets. They are as alert as the addicts, and most of them are as gay. They slow down in the Piazza, crying politely, "Permesso," asking people to let them pass, and as they pass, they inspect the crowd with curiosity. Children and women in tattered clothes, carrying great loads on their heads, and men bearing produce and baggage, stones, sand, and timber in astonishing weights cross through the Piazza, for no automobile or horse-and-wagon can go beyond the Piazza. They sometimes stop to rest there, without removing their burdens. They stand and gaze at the crowds, astonished at first, like people looking at strange animals in the zoo. I have studied their faces, and in none of them have I observed envy or resentment; if anything, besides the expression of awe, there is a look of pity.

Add to the foregoing groups and individuals a dozen priests, a few professional invalids walking and standing about, half a dozen fishermen, six Frenchmen at a table for two, a group from Hollywood—and some people from the ringside of El Morocco; include in the late hours a few rich American women with their hangers-on, a handful of international panderers, and here and there an honest-to-God tourist and his wife, and the picture of the Piazza is complete. At the height of the season, when every hotel room is taken, old cars no longer in running order are dragged here, and people pay to sit in them, or even sleep all night in them.

Under the platform on which stand the small green bathing cabins at the Marina Piccola are a few white-painted boats which are called sandolinis. This boat has the shape of a sardine as it is seen from above, and one balances on it like riding a bicycle over a tightwire with the hands off the bars. The sandolini is nine feet in length; midship is a square recess like a well or cockpit, and in this sits the rider, propelling himself with a double-ended paddle. Once you know how to use the sandolini you can move along at a good speed.

I hired one of these every day and rowed to a rock from which

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I swam. In a week I became proficient enough to ride as the natives do—that is, sitting up on the small deck with the feet in the well. After two weeks of this, on a day when the sea seemed calm, I started at the Marina Piccola and, paddling past my rock and on westward beyond the Grotto Verde, I steered for the lighthouse at Punta Carena. In another two hours of steady and not tiring paddling I went by the Blue Grotto and came to the Baths of Tiberio, where I swam and ate.

I went on after an hour's rest and paddled to Marina Grande, and then set out to finish circumnavigating the island by skirting the massive cliff (the small coffee cup) on the top of which is the Castle of Tiberio. A boat passed me, and the people waved. Going round the east end of the island I came into the strait between Sorrento and Capri, and the colour of the water changed from green to slate; and in the channel, suddenly, were white-caps.

I kept close to the rocks and paddled. The sea lifted me up about ten feet and after every rise, in a sickening corkscrew motion, the sandolini sank down—or rather was sucked down and against the rocky bottom. It was too late to turn round, and it would have been too difficult to paddle against the wind back to the Marina Grande. I will always remember the stern of the boat from which people had waved as it disappeared behind the mountain.

Along this coast are many grottoes, and from them come noises made by the action of the sea. Some of these sounds are as if a herd of thirsty beasts were drinking, while others roar; some, as a wave rises, make a hissing sound and shoot out a jet of compressed air mixed with water. There are grottoes that moan awfully—and sigh. I came to one that gave the illusion of the doors of a vast bank vault being shut; every fearful noise of watery catastrophe was along this passage.

I managed by rowing fast to keep the sandolini atop some waves like a surfboat. Looking up I saw the rock from which Tiberius is said to have thrown people, and the height of the rock at this time only accentuated the depth of the water. I can be brave when people are around; but when I'm alone, telling myself that I'll make it all right doesn't help much. At one time I had a lift—and hope. Going round a rock and passing a clucking cave I thought I'd come to some land, but I had miscalculated the distance. Next, rowing past the White Grotto, I expected to see the Faraglioni and a small settlement of fishermen's houses. But there was not a ship or a house in sight, and there was no place I could get ashore without being dashed against the rocks.

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At one spot there is a very small beach, but this was foaming in the tide, and the rocks periodically exposed there had ridges like razorblades. I don't think I have invoked the help of God for myself since the days of childhood. It seemed to me on that stretch of dark travel, with no apparent exit from danger, that finally the bill was being presented to me and the time had come.

I once did the scenery for a play called *Noé*, by Obey. Pierre Fresnay played the title role, and towards the last curtain he raised his hands and, looking heavenwards, said, "Thank you, dear Lord." I thought of that scene as I kept paddling methodically; and suddenly, with these same words and my paddle held up in both hands, I greeted the sight of Punta Tragara. By that time I was sitting in several inches of water.

The sea rose and fell as I approached the small landing. The fishermen had taken out all their boats, and now two of them came down and after a great deal of waiting for the right wave to lift the craft close enough to them, they got me and the sandolini up on the rock. Before the next wave came they had hoisted me out of the boat.

I was very thirsty, and presently I was on the way to the wonderful Restaurant da Luigi. This place is characteristic of the isle, and here one can see why Capri has not suffered the fate of the Riviera. The Restaurant da Luigi is built on a platform supported by high, slim chestnut trees. Its cover is of straw mats, the chairs as well as the floor seem to be made of old orange crates; it all sways and creaks as you walk, it creaks as you sit down, and every time you move it moves with you. The food is fine and the diner is served with a special concern as if he were the guest of the family.

With all its fame, Capri never has been "developed." Nowhere in Capri is there a "casino"—nowhere has anybody done so much as build a pier for guests to go swimming, or even a stairway or a ladder down into the water. The tiny beaches are covered with egg-sized pebbles that hurt your feet, and all except the native fishermen stumble along the shore and into the water with both arms extended to balance themselves.

On top of this, the submerged rocks are covered with sea urchins, a glasslike jet-black kind wearing a bouquet of spines, long, black, and sharp, and arranged like those of an angered porcupine. When stepped on, the spines break off under the skin, and the exceedingly painful removal of these splinters is an operation as frequent and casual as having grit removed from eyes in New York drugstores.

The sea urchins are most plentiful at the Baths of Tiberio and the Punta Tragara. The bathing cabins are little houses

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with a bench inside, made by the fishermen, and they are clean. Unless you swim from a boat, the best way to go swimming without pain is to buy tight-fitting rubber shoes—they are especially made for this kind of seashore and are sold in several stores in Capri.

From time to time I hired a fourteen stone coachman named Luigi Balsamo. The day I got off the boat in Capri, Luigi was there with other coachmen but he, unlike his colleagues, did not shout for patronage among the debarking passengers. It was raining, and Luigi let his horse eat in peace. In fact, he held an umbrella over it.

The horses here are reasonably well treated; the natives have learnt that tourists don't like them to use the whip. Also, the horses have no bits but instead a light, loose metal brace, sometimes cushioned with lamb's-wool. The brace is placed over the horse's nose, the reins are attached to two bars that extend left and right. Wagon and gear are kept shined and polished, and the horses are washed and rubbed every day. Into the harnesses on top of their heads are stuck flags, feathers, or brightly coloured artificial flowers.

On one drive Luigi took me to the famous Villa San Michele. It was built by the author of *The Story of San Michele*, Dr. Axel Munthe, a man Luigi, having sometimes driven him about, remembered well.

Luigi quoted the one German phrase the doctor—a Swede—was fond of: " Gute Reise," a contraction of " I wish you a good trip "—a way of saying good-bye. Disliking German tourists on Capri, the only pleasure the doctor felt about them was to wish them good-bye.

The house of Luigi stands at the end of a narrow street in Anacapri. At the end of a day his horse is put into the clean and warm stable on the ground floor of the house, where he is covered with a blanket and fed his hay. Upstairs the family sits down to spaghetti Milanese—eight pounds of it every night. With it they drink a good Capri wine, the real one. I told Luigi what a wonderful life he led.

" Ah, signore, Luigi knows it," he said, his family smiling confirmation.

The day I left Capri, Luigi took my baggage and me down to the ship. He wanted, in the fashion of Italians, to be especially nice to me. He pulled out a handkerchief, dabbed his eyes and, shaking both my hands, he said to me on account of my accent, " Auf Wiedersehen " and—" Gute Reise."

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TARBUCKLE MASTERS HIS HARP

BY B. W. TAYLOR

"IT's all very well for you lot," said the Soul of the old sailor as he hunched dejectedly at his place on the Reception Cloud, "but I gets terrible bored sitting here trying to play this danged harp. I can't get a sound out of it."

There was no answer for a time, apart from the twanging of strings as his companions practised their scales.

Then a thin voice at his side said, "The sooner you learn to play it, Mr. Tarbuckle, the sooner you'll get to Paradise Proper. If you ask me, you're very lucky to be here at all after the riotous life you've led. As it is, you've been in Reception for longer than the rest of us." She struck a trembling chord and turned away.

It was true, thought Tarbuckle. He had seen dozens of souls come and go since he first arrived on the Reception Cloud from his berth in the Old Seamen's Home; he scarcely got on chatting terms with the newcomers before they had mastered their harps and were gone.

His white robe took on a greenish tint whenever he thought about it. "I'll be getting a long-service medal if I'm here much longer," he muttered. "I'm just not cut out for this angel lark. Halo and white shift, harp and all." He shuddered at the thought of his oppos seeing him in that rigout.

There were times when he almost wished he had been detailed off for Down There. It had sounded quite jolly when he passed it on his way up, and he was certain he had heard the voices of past shipmates roaring *Maggie May* at the top of their smoke-roughened lungs.

He had almost asked the Angel who was driving the pick-up cloud to drop him off there, until he remembered that Hell was in fact a giant Stokehold, and no self-respecting A.B. would think of passing the rest of eternity with a company of stokers.

Still, sitting moaning wasn't going to solve his problems, and

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it was time for his evening stroll round the cloud's perimeter.

"These danged harps!" He had tried to ditch his overboard on countless occasions, only to find it return to his unwilling hand like a yo-yo on a string. If that Angel in the stores who had kitted him up with his shift and halo had used a bit of imagination, he would have issued him a more seamanlike instrument, like an accordion or a mouth organ perhaps.

It seemed that stores ratings up here were just as daft as stores ratings in Royal Naval Barracks.

"This place is worse than choky," he muttered. At least there was oakum to pick and the cell bucket to polish, and you could get your head down in peace without a bunch of idiots bashing away at harps at all hours.

He stopped his circuit of the cloud and, kneeling at the edge, peered over, as was his habit in times of stress. He had often tried to focus his eyes through the vastness of space, trying to pick up a familiar object, but had never been successful.

Tonight, however, he could have sworn he saw a faint movement below. He blinked, shook his head, and looked over. Sure enough, there it was again, a vague disturbed movement over a vast area below him. Could it be—?

"Well, blow me down!" he muttered. "It's the sea—the 'oggin!" As his excitement grew the distance seemed to dwindle and he was able to see the great pounding waves smashing on a rocky coastline.

It was then he saw the ship. She was a pot-bellied bawley, decks awash, her mast hanging over the side, held by halyards and guys and beating her plates like a battering-ram. The waves seemed intent on smashing her on to the rocks, and without conscious effort Tarbuckle found himself in the wheelhouse, bracing himself against the savage, bucking roll. His first instinct was to throw his weight on the wheel with the two grey-faced, sweating seamen, but as he tried to grapple with the whirling spokes he recognised the futility of his action—his hand passed through both the wheel and the blue-jerseyed arm of one of the helmsmen.

His frustration mounted when, despite leaps and contortions, he was unable to make them aware of his presence, and he rushed through the bulkhead that separated the wheelhouse from the wireless-room. Sparks was thumping the key like a man demented, spurred on by a tiny man in a peaked cap, no doubt the Skipper. From their shouted conversation it was soon apparent that the transmitter was useless.

Rage and frustration gripped Able Seaman Tarbuckle. Here he was on board a stricken ship, with fifty years of sea-going

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experience behind him, and unable to do a thing to help. If only he could exchange his harp for something useful. He struck it in his fury, and it let out a high ping of protest. He gazed at it in amazement—it was the first time he had ever got a note out of it. Inspiration gripped him—it wasn't so different from the high beep of a morse key. He thumbed the string again and, encouraged, began to muster his rusty morse code.

Sparks was still beating his useless key when the soul of Able Seaman Tarbuckle started sending his harpstring SOS out into the ether. How long he stood there plucking he could not recollect, but he banged out the ship's position until his thumb was sore. He was ready to throw his hand in when an oilskinned figure hurled himself into the cabin with the news that a trawler was calling them up on an Aldis lamp to say they had received their SOS and were standing by to take them in tow.

Weariness overtook Tarbuckle then, and he willed himself back on his cloud—he'd sleep for a week, harps or no harps, after that lot.

He looked around him. If this was his cloud it had changed in his absence. He could have sworn he was standing in the middle of a little fishing village he remembered from his youth, cottages, quayside and all. His reverie was broken by a deep Cornish voice from behind him.

"Well, you mastered your harp, Tarbuckle. Welcome to Paradise, *Old Sailors' Section.*"

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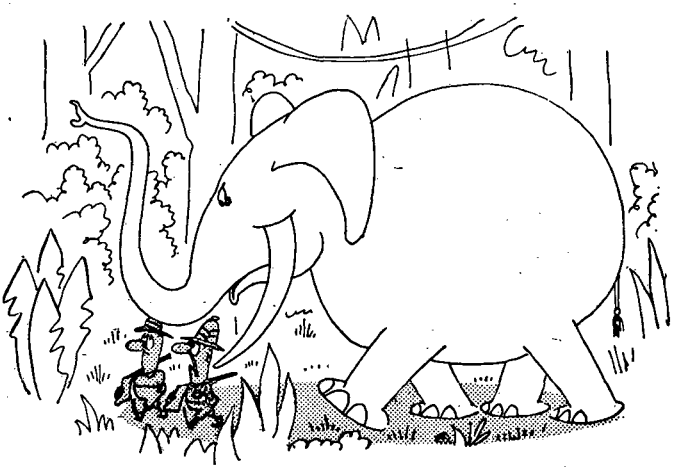

"It's getting dark early this evening, don't you think, Edgar?"

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A dramatic Western from a master hand

ONE MAN'S HONOUR

BY JACK SCHAEFER

LATE afternoon sun slanted over one of the higher ridges and shone on the sparse beginnings of a homestead claim. Clear and hot in the clean air, it shone on a long strip of shallow-ploughed ground; on a sagging pole corral where an old milk cow and two stocky ungainly draught horses drooped in motionless rest; and on the shelter, half dugout, half timbered with scrub logs. Trimmed branches corded together and plastered over with clay formed the roof and a rusting stovepipe rose from it.

On the split-log doorstep sat a little girl. Her short scratched sunburnt legs barely reached the ground. Her light brown hair, sun-bleached in lighter streaks, curled softly down to frame a round snub-nosed face whose dark eyes, unmasked by the light lashes, were wide and bright. A twenty-foot length of rope was tied round her waist and fastened to a staple driven into the door-jamb. She was small and serious and very quiet and she smoothed the skirt of her small flour-sacking dress down over her bare knees and poked, earnest and intent, one small moccasined foot at an ant scurrying in the dooryard dust.

Behind her, in the dim recess of the one-windowed shelter, a tall flat-bodied man stooped over a rumpled bed and laid a moistened cloth across the forehead of a woman lying there.

His voice was low and harsh with irritation but the touch of his hand was gentle. "What's got into ye?" he said.

The woman stared up at him, apology plain on her thin flushed face. "I don't know," she whispered. "It just came on me sudden-like." Her voice came faint and wavering. "You'll have to do the food. There's soup in the kettle."

The man brushed one hand impatiently at the flies hovering over the bed. "Ye'll be better in the morning," he said. Abruptly he turned and went to the stove set against the wall.

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The woman watched him. She tried to speak and could not. She lay still a moment and summoned strength to rise on her elbows and send her voice across the room to him. "Wait," she said. "Wait. You'll have to do the game with her. It's her fun. It helps her learn."

The man swung his head to look at the doorway. The little girl sat still, her back to him, her head bent forward as she peered at something by her feet. The last sun slanting over the ridge filtered through the tangled curls along her neck.

Slowly the lines of worry and irritation faded from the man's face and the tightness round his mouth eased. He went to the doorway and leaned low to untie the rope round her waist.

She stood up, small and soft beside his hard height, and stretched back her head to look up at him. She raised one small hand and reached to put it in one of his big calloused hands. Together they went along the front of the shelter towards the corral.

Near the corner the man stopped. He slapped his free hand on the side of the shelter. "This," he said.

Gravely the little girl regarded the shelter. A triumphant smile crinkled her small face. "Hullo, house," she said.

"Right," the man said. They moved on and stopped by an old wagon pulled in close alongside the shelter. The man reached under and pulled out an empty milk pail and held it up.

Gravely the little girl regarded it. Her small eyebrows drew down in a frown. She looked up at the man in doubt and back at the object in his hand. "Hullo," she said slowly, "hullo, buck-et."

"That's it!" The man grinned down at her and reached to put the pail back under the wagon.

They moved on to the sagging poles of the corral. The man pointed over the poles at the cow, and the little girl peered through them beside him. She spoke at once, quick and proud. "Hullo, cow."

"Mighty smart ye're getting to be," the man said. He pointed over the poles at the draught horses standing together in a corner.

The little girl tossed her head. "Hullo, horse."

"No," the man said. "There's two of them. Hor-ses."

The little girl looked up at him, small and earnest and intent. She looked back through the poles across the corral. "Hullo, hor-ses."

Forty-three miles to the south and five miles west of the meagre town on the river, where the ground dipped in a hollow some ten feet below the level expanse around, a saddled horse

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stood alone, ground-reined, patiently waiting. A wide-brimmed weather-worn hat hung on the saddle horn.

Several hundred yards away the river road followed the bank, a dust track running west into fading distance and east towards the low hills hiding the town. Close by the roadside two small rocks jutted out of the ground, butted against each other. The late afternoon sun slanted down on them and they made a small lengthening patch of shade.

Beside them, stretched out, head and shoulders into the shade, a man lay flat, belly down, pressed against the ground. Beside him lay a rifle. Its barrel had been rubbed with dirt to remove all shine. He was a short man, short and thick, with a head that seemed small, out of proportion to the thick body, set too close into the hunched shoulders. His hair was a dirty black, close-cropped with the rough scissor slashes of his own cutting plainly marked, and it merged with no break into the dark unshaven stubble down his cheeks and round his narrow tight-lipped mouth.

He raised his head higher to sight along the road to the west through the cleft where the tops of the two rocks joined. Pushing with his toes in worn scarred old knee-length boots, he hitched his body a few inches to the left so that it lay almost parallel to the road, invisible to anyone approaching from the west.

As he moved, the hammer of the revolver in a holster at his side made a tiny groove in the ground and he reached to test the firmness of its seat in the holster and free it of any clinging dirt. His voice was a low murmur lost in the vast empty reaches of space, the flat inflectionless voice of a man accustomed to being alone and to talking to himself.

"Last place they'd be expecting trouble," he said.

He lay flat, his head relaxed on its side with one ear against the ground, and the sun dropped slowly down the sky and the patch of shade of the rocks spread down his back and reached the brass-studded cartridge belt round his waist, and far out along the road to the west a tiny puff of dust appeared and crept closer, barely seeming to move, only to grow imperceptibly larger.

Faint tremors in the ground came to the man's ear. He raised his head and sighted through the rock cleft. He rolled on his side and pulled the tattered old bandanna tied loosely round his neck up over his face, up to the bridge of his nose so that only his eyes and forehead showed over it. He rolled back into position and took the rifle and eased the barrel forward through the cleft. Propped on his elbows, with the curved butt of the rifle against his right shoulder and his right cheek under the bandanna against the stock, he watched the puff of dust far out along the road.

It was no longer just a puff of dust. Emerging from it, yet

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never escaping, and always emerging as the dust rose under the hoofs, was a light fast freight wagon drawn by two stout horses at a steady trot. Two men sat on the board-backed seat, the driver and another man with a shotgun between his knees, the butt on the floorboard, the barrel pointing at the sky.

The man behind the rocks waited. He waited until the wagon was little more than one hundred feet away, and in a few seconds he would begin to be visible over the top of the rocks, and his finger tightened on the trigger of the rifle and with the crash of the shot the man with the shotgun jolted hard against the back of the wagon seat and the horses reared, beating upwards with their front hoofs and trying to swing away, and the man with the shotgun dropped it clattering on the floorboard and struggled to stand on the swaying platform and toppled sideways into the road dust and lay still.

The man behind the rocks let the rifle stock fall to the ground and leapt up and in the leaping took the revolver from the holster at his side. He moved out and round the rocks and closer to the wagon and watched the driver fighting with the horses to quiet them. He watched the driver pull them to quivering stillness and become aware of him and the gun in his hand and stiffen in a tight silence.

"That's right," he said. "Keep your hands on those reins where I can see them." He moved closer and to the right side of the wagon and with his left hand took the shotgun from the floorboard and tossed it back from the road. He moved out and round the horses to the left side of the wagon and took the driver's revolver from its holster and threw it towards the river. He stepped back, away from the wagon.

"Now," he said. "Take it slow. Wrap the reins round that brake. Put your hands up behind your head."

The driver hesitated. His lips were pale, pressed tight together, and a slow flush crept up his cheeks. He reached slowly and looped the reins over the brake handle and raised his hands and clasped them together at the back of his head.

The man with the gun stepped up by the body of the wagon. He was careful to stand facing part way forward so that the driver was always within his angle of vision. With his left hand he unfastened the rope lashed over the wagon and pulled away the light canvas dust-cover. Four square boxes and several small crates and half a dozen sacks of potatoes were exposed to view.

He chuckled, a strange harsh sound in the wide silence. "Mighty little load to be packing a guard," he said.

He swung his head for a quick check of the load and back to look straight at the driver.

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His voice was suddenly sharp and biting. "Where is it? I know you're carrying it."

The driver had pivoted his body at the hips to watch him and stared at him and said nothing.

The man with the gun grunted and reached with his left hand to yank aside one of the sacks of potatoes. He reached again and heaved to move aside the one that had been beneath the first. He plunged the hand into the hole opened to the bed of the wagon and felt around and pulled out a small metal box. He stepped back and again his strange harsh chuckle sounded in the silence.

The voice of the driver broke through the tight line of his lips. "You'll never get away with it, Kemp. I'd know that gunbelt anywhere."

The man with the gun let the metal box fall and pulled the bandanna down from his face. "Too bad," he said.

He raised his right hand and the gun in it bucked with the shot, and the driver rose upright off the seat, arching his back in sudden agony, and fell sideways over the footboard to strike on the wagon tongue and bounce to the ground between the harness rugs and with the roar of the shot the horses were rearing and they plunged ahead and the wheels crunched over the driver's body as they rolled forward along the road.

The man with the gun took one leap after the wagon and stopped. He raised the gun again and in almost aimless haste fired the four remaining bullets in it at the plunging horses. The horses drove forward, goaded by several flesh wounds, and the reins ripped off the brake handle and the wagon careened after them and swerved to the left, and the left front wheel struck against the rocks behind which the man had been hiding. The wagon bounced upwards as the wheel cracked and the harness traces snapped and the horses, freed of the weight, surged in frantic gallop along the road.

The man threw the empty revolver to the ground. He raced to the wagon and round it to the rocks and leapt over them and grabbed the rifle. He dropped to his right knee and braced his left elbow on his left knee to steady his aim and fired and one of the horses staggered and fell, and the other, pulled sideways by the falling weight, lashed frantically with its hoofs and the harness parted and the horse galloped ahead alone along the road. Already it was a far shape, dwindling into distance, and the man fired again and again until the magazine of the rifle was emptied and the bullets kicked small spurts of dust and the horse galloped on unhit into the low hills.

The man threw down the rifle and stood erect. He was shaking with a tense fury. He stood still, forcing himself to quiet;

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driving the shaking out of his body. He drew a long breath. "That'll tell 'em too damn soon," he said.

Quickly he took up the rifle and opened the breech and blew through the barrel and loaded the magazine with bullets from the pocket of his faded old shirt. He hurried back where he had dropped the metal box. The two bodies lay near in the road dust and already the flies were gathering and he paid no attention to them.

He picked up the revolver and loaded it with bullets from the brass-studded belt round his waist. He reached down and blasted the lock of the metal box with a single shot and ripped the top open and took out two small plump leather bags and a sheaf of notes and jammed these into the pockets of his old patched pants. At a steady run he moved away from the road, across the level expanse, to the hollow several hundred yards away and the waiting horse.

With swift sure gestures he slapped the hat on his head and pushed the rifle into its saddle scabbard and transferred the two small bags and the notes to the saddlebag. He swung up and yanked the horse round, lifting it into a fast lope, and headed north through the red-brown reaches of distance.

Early morning sun slanted in from the east on the homestead shelter. It made a narrow triangular patch of brightness on the packed dirt floor through the open doorway and pushed a soft glow farther into the room. On the edge of a low short truckle cot against the back wall by the foot of the big bed the little girl sat, her body bent forward, her small face puckered in a frown as she concentrated on the problem of putting the right little moccasin on the right foot.

On the bed itself the woman lay thin and motionless. Her eyes were closed. At intervals the eyelids twitched and flickered and were still. Her mouth was partly open and her breath drew through it in long slow straining gasps.

On the floor beside the bed, stretched on an old quilt folded over, the man lay asleep, fully dressed except for his short thick boots.

The little girl finished with the moccasins. She slid to the floor and turned and tried to smooth the old blanket on her cot. She took hold of the cot and tugged at it to pull it a few inches out from the wall. She went to the end of it away from the bed and turned her small back to it and against it and pushed with her feet to move it along the floor and slide it under the bed.

The scratching sound of the cot runners scraping on the hard dirt floor roused the man. He bent his body at the waist to sit up

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and wavered and fell back. He pushed against the floor with both hands and was up to sitting position. He looked round, his eyes glassy and staring, and saw the boots and his attention focused on them and he reached for them and struggled to get them on. He heaved himself over on one hip and pushed against the floor and stood swaying on his feet. Sweat streamed down his face and his body shook as with a chill.

He took a step and staggered and fell towards the wall and clutched at it for support. He moved along it to the head of the bed. Leaning his weight on one hand on the bed, he reached with the other to the woman's shoulder and gently shook her. Her head wobbled limply at the pressure and her eyes remained closed. He straightened against the wall. Slowly he wiped one hand down over his damp face and let it fall to his side.

The little girl stood by the foot of the bed and looked up at him. Slowly his attention focused on her. He stared at her for a long moment and she looked up at him and a small smile of greeting touched her face and was gone.

He drew a long slow sobbing breath and by sheer effort of will pushed out from the wall. His feet dragged and he moved in a strange lurching walk. He took the old quilt from the floor and reached under the bed to take the old blanket from the cot and pulled a pile of empty flour sacks down from a shelf. With these in his arms he staggered to the doorway and out and along the front of the shelter to the old wagon beside it. He heaved his load into the body of the wagon and leaned panting on the side to reach in and spread out the sacks and put the blanket and quilt over them.

Weakness took him and he swayed against one of the wagon wheels and hung over it while sweat dripped in tiny glistening beads from his chin to the ground below. He pushed out from the wheel and veered to the shelter wall and hitched his way along towards the door.

The little girl was in the doorway and she backed away inside and he held to the doorjamb and pulled himself round and in and a short way along the inside wall and reached for the team harness hanging on two wooden pegs, and in the reaching suddenly sagged in a limp helplessness and collapsed doubling forward to bump against the wall and slide to the floor. His body stretched out and rolled over and his unseeing eyes stared upward a few seconds and the lids dropped and no motion stirred in him except the long slow heaving of his chest.

The little girl stared at the man lying still and silent and her eyebrows drew together in a frown. She looked at the woman on the bed and back at the man on the floor. She turned away and

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went to the table under the one window in the right wall and climbed on the chair beside it and then on to the table.

Standing on tiptoe and leaning out she reached one hand into an earthenware jar on the shelf by the window and took it out with a cracker clutched in her fingers. She climbed down to the chair and sat on it with her short sunburnt legs swinging over the edge. Gravely she regarded the biscuit in her hand. "Hullo, crack-er," she said in a soft hushed voice. Gravely she bit off a corner and began to chew it.

A mile and a half to the south-east the early morning sun sent long shadows streaming out from a man and a horse climbing the rough slope of a twisting boulder-strewn ridge. The man rode with his short thick body hunched forward, and the sun glinted on the brass studdings of the cartridge belt round his waist. The horse was sweat-streaked, tired, taking the slope in short spurts as the man kicked it forward.

They topped the ridge and dropped a short way down the near side and stopped. The man swung to the ground. He took off his weather-worn hat and slapped at himself with it to knock some of the dust off his clothes and hung it on the saddle horn. He turned back to the top of the ridge and lay flat on the blunt bare rock to peer over. No motion anywhere disturbed the empty distance.

He turned his head to look at the horse standing with braced legs apart, head hanging, grateful for the rest. He settled himself more comfortably on the rock and watched over the ridge top. The shadows of the boulders down the slope shrank slightly as the sun crept upward and far out along his back trail round a swelling shoulder of wind-piled sand a straggling line of seven tiny figures crawled into view.

"Damn funny," he said in a flat inflectionless voice. "Can't shake 'em."

The seven tiny figures crawled closer, increasing in size, seeming to increase in pace as the distance dwindled, and they were seven men on horseback, six in a ragged relatively compact group and one alone in the lead.

The man on the ridge top shaded his eyes against slanting sun and studied the figure in the lead, distinguishable now across the dwindling distance, a lean long-armed figure wearing a buckskin shirt, slim and straight in the saddle on a tall grey horse. He wore no hat and his hair, iron-grey and long, caught the sun clearly in the bobbing rhythm of riding. He rode at a fast trot and at intervals pulled his horse to a brief walk and leaned in the saddle to check the ground beside and ahead.

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The man on the ridge top smacked a clenched fist on the rock. "That's it," he said. "Thought he'd left for the mines." He licked his dry lips and spat out the dust-dirty saliva. "Can't just keep running," he said. "Not with him after me."

He crawled down from the ridge top a few feet and turned squatting on his heels to look down the near slope. Down where it slipped into level expanse of red-brown ground and sparse silver-green of sagebrush, a few-score feet out from the base, a stony dry stream bed followed the twisting formation of the ridge. To the right, swinging in along the level from around a curving twist of the ridge and cutting across the dry stream bed to push in a long arc towards a far break in the next ridge, ran the wagon trace. Plain in the sand dust of the trace, visible from the height, were the day-old unending ribbon ruts of wheel tracks and the hoofprints of many horses heading north.

The man's eyes brightened. He leapt down the slope to his horse and took the rifle from the saddle scabbard and was back on his belly at the ridge top. The seven figures, suddenly larger, made grotesque in the clear clean brightness of sun by the long shadows streaming sideways from them, were little more than half a mile away.

Deliberately, in slow succession, careless of exact aim at the range, he fired once at the figure in the lead and twice at the group behind and a strange harsh chuckle came from him as he saw them scatter and swing their horses and gallop back and cluster again in a jumble round the lean man on the grey horse.

"That'll do it," he said. "They'll take time working up this hill."

He pulled back from the ridge top and ran to the horse and jammed the rifle into the scabbard and slammed the hat on his head and swung into the saddle. At a hard run he drove the horse angling down the slope, across the first few-score feet of level stretch, across the dry stream bed and angling on across the level to the wagon trace.

He rode along the trace thirty feet, forty, and eased the horse to a slow stop. Holding it steady, headed north, he backed it along the trace, back to where he had angled in and past, back to the crossing of the dry stream bed.

Gripping the reins short and pulling up hard on the horse's head so that it rose on its hind legs, front hoofs pawing the air, he yanked its head savagely to the left and slammed the heels of his heavy old boots into its flanks and it leapt, twisting sideways, and was off the trace on the dry stones of the stream bed and he clamped down hard on the reins to hold it from breaking into a surging gallop. Head bent to one side, peering down in steady

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concentration, he walked the horse along the stream bed, picking his way, holding to the side where the rolled loose stone lay thickest.

He turned his head to look back and up at the ridge top where he had been. Faintly, over the high rock, came the sound of a shot and then another. He looked ahead where the stream bed, following the ridge, curved left with it and disappeared from sight. He urged the horse into a trot and he was round the bend, out of sight of the wagon trace behind. He pulled the horse to the right and out of the stream bed and on the easier sand-silt ground he pushed it into a lope, moving west as the ground rose and swinging north-westward as it dropped again.

The morning sun, higher now, shone clear and hot on the homestead shelter and beat slanting against the high ridge behind and beyond. A quarter of a mile away, up past the long shallow-ploughed strip by the almost dry stream bed, close in by the base of the ridge, a man sat, short and thick and hunched in the saddle, on a tired sweat-streaked horse. He held the wide brim of his weather-worn hat low over his eyes with one hand as he studied the whole scene before him.

Not a sound that he could hear disturbed the empty silence. Not a living thing moved anywhere in sight except the two horses and the old cow in the corral twitching in patient endurance at the flies. He dropped the hand from his hat and reached to take the rifle from its scabbard and hold it ready across the saddle in front of him. He urged the horse into a slow walk, along the base of the ridge and swinging to come to the shelter from the rear.

Fifty feet from the low blank rear wall of the shelter he stopped the horse and dismounted. Quietly he slipped the rifle back into the scabbard and took off his hat and hung it on the saddle horn and in the same gesture flowing onward took the revolver from the holster at his side.

Quietly he walked to the rear wall of the shelter. He moved along the rear wall to the right corner and leaned to peer round and then to look across the short space at the corral. He saw that the horses were heavy draught animals and he shook his head in disgust and he saw the swelling udders of the cow, and a puzzled frown showed through the dark stubble on his face, and the cow, sighting him, pressed against the poles of the corral and lowed with a soft sighing moan. At the sound he leapt back, close against the rear wall, and the empty silence regained and held and he relaxed and moved again, forward and round the corner.

He was moving past the wagon drawn in by the side of the

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shelter when he stopped and dropped below the wagon level and listened. Faint, from inside the shelter, he heard a slow creaking sound, then again and yet again and continuing in slow steady rhythm.

He waited. The sound stopped and in the silence there was another sound, not heard, below hearing, sensed or felt, and the slow creaking began again and continued, deliberate, unhurried.

Cautiously he moved, forward, round the front corner, along the blank wall towards the open doorway. Half crouched, gun raised and ready, he swung swiftly round the doorjamb and into the doorway and there, halfway across the room and confronting him, perched on the seat edge of an old rocking chair and swinging her small body to make the chair roll on its rockers, was a little girl.

Caught, rigid in a kind of frantic immobility, he stared at her; and her eyes widened at the sight of him and her small body stiffened, swaying gently to the dying motion of the chair. Gravely she regarded him. Her lips lifted slightly in a suggestion of a smile. "Hullo, man," she said.

Slowly he straightened. He turned his head and saw the woman motionless on the bed and the man limp on the floor and heard the other sound, audible now inside the room, the long slow unconscious gaspings for breath.

He looked back at the little girl and suddenly he was aware of the gun in his hand and he turned his body sideways to her. As he turned, his head remained towards her swivelling on his short thick neck and with a quick furtive motion he slid the gun into its holster. He stood still a long moment, his head fixed in its sidelong tipped slant over his shoulder, and looked down at her, and gravely she watched him and he seemed unable to look away.

Abruptly he jerked his head round straight, swinging his eyes to inspect the room. He went to the shelf by the one window and took a nearly empty flour sack from the floor beneath and laid this on the table. He reached to the shelf and snatched the few cans there and dropped them into the sack.

He stopped, silent and tense, his jaws clenched together, the cords in his neck standing out in strain. He swung round and leaned against the table and jutted his head forward and down at her.

His voice struck at her with an angry intensity. "There'll be people coming! They'll untangle my trail! They'll get here some time!"

She stared at him, understanding or not understanding unknown on her face, and he pulled himself round and scooped the bag off the table. He strode to the doorway and out and along

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the front wall of the shelter and round and back to his horse.

He jammed the old hat on his head and fumbled in the saddle-bag until he found a short piece of cord and with this tied the flour sack close up to the saddle horn. He mounted and the horse, stronger for the rest, responded as he pulled it round and headed off north-westward, angling towards the high ridge.

He rode slowly, head down, hunched in the saddle, letting the horse find its own pace. There was no urging along the reins, no drumming of heels on its flanks, and the horse stopped. The man sat still in the saddle.

He drew a long breath and let it out with a sighing sound. His voice came, flat, inflectionless. "Maybe they won't," he said.

Suddenly an explosive fury seemed to burst inside him and strike outwards into action. Viciously he yanked the horse round to the right and kicked it into headlong gallop, heading north-eastward towards a far lowering of the ridge.

The fury in him dwindled with the wind of movement and a quietness came over him. He was aware of the horse straining under him, of its heavy breathing. He pulled it to a steady jogging.

He rode on: a short thick man on a tired horse, dirty, unshaven, dingy in old stained clothes except for the glintings of brass on the cartridge belt round his waist. He rode on: a small moving blot in the vast red-brown reaches of distance, and he passed over the far lowering of the ridge and down the long gradual slope beyond and up a wide ground swell of shifting sand and before him, stretching out of distance into distance, was the wagon trace and a third of a mile away, headed north along it, moving away from him, were seven men on horseback. . .

The lean man on the grey horse and another man were in the lead, one on each side of the trace, bent in their saddles, studying the ground as they moved ahead, and the other five followed.

The man on the ground swell of shifting sand stopped his horse and took the rifle from its scabbard. A strange harsh chuckle sounded in the sun-hot silence and was cut short by the shot and he saw the spurt of dust beside the lean man's horse and all of them halt with sudden startled jerks and swing in their saddles to look towards him.

He jammed the rifle back into its scabbard and lifted his horse, rearing to wheel it round, and drove it at a fast gallop back down the ground swell of sand the way he had come. He was well up the long gradual slope towards the lowering of the ridge when he looked back and saw them coming over the ground swell and lining out in full gallop behind him.

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Savagely he beat at the horse and it surged up and over the lowering of the ridge and as it raced down the other side towards the long level stretch to the homestead shelter he felt the first falterings in its stride, the slight warning stumblings and recoveries, and he took hold of the sack tied to the saddle horn and snapped the cord with a lurch and let the sack fall.

The horse drove on, frantic in lessening rushes of strength, and again he looked back. They were coming steadily, no closer than before, coming with steady intensity of purpose. He saw them pull, sliding to a bunched brief stop by the sack, and one swing down and grab it and shake out the contents in a flurry of flour, and in the stopping he increased his lead.

The shelter was just ahead now and he yanked the horse to a skidding stop in front of it and whipped the revolver from the holster at his side and fired two shots towards the doorway, low, into the doorstep. He caught a flashing glimpse of the little girl inside shrinking back from the roar of the shots and he was beating the horse forward again, past the corral, across the shallow-ploughed strip, angling back towards the high ridge.

He reached the base and started up and the horse, faltering often now, laboured into the climb. It stopped, legs braced and quivering, ribs heaving, a bloody froth bubbling in its nostrils. He pivoted to the right in the saddle and looked back.

Riderless horses stood in front of the shelter and the lean man in the buckskin shirt near them directing the others. One man ran towards the closest brackish pool in the almost dry stream bed with a bucket in his hand. Another strode towards the corral with the team harness over his shoulder. Another heaved at the tongue of the old wagon to swing it out from the side wall of the shelter. And yet another mounted one of the saddled horses and swung off south-eastward.

The man on the ridge slope checked each in the one swift sliding glance and stared intently at the blank walls of the shelter as if trying to force vision through them. Suddenly, as thought and bodily awareness coincided, he pivoted round and to the left in the saddle.

Two of them had not stopped by the shelter, had galloped on past and swept in a wide arc towards him. They were little more than three hundred yards away. One of them had stopped and was raising a rifle to his shoulder.

The man on the ridge yanked upward on his reins trying to lift the horse into motion and even before he heard the shot he felt the horse leap shuddering and its forelegs doubled under and he jumped free as it collapsed forward and sideways on the slope. He leaned down and jerked the rifle free and crouched behind the

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still quivering body of the horse and sent a single shot crashing down towards the level and saw the two men circle back to a safer distance and turn their horses sideways towards him and dismount to stand behind them with the barrels of rifles resting over the saddles.

He reached with one hand into the pocket of his old shirt and with fumbling fingers counted the rifle bullets there. He turned his head to study the slope rising behind him. Fifty feet higher it levelled in a small ledge that had caught several large stones in age-gone descent. Above were other small ledges.

He looked back over the body of the horse and sent another shot crashing down and leapt up crouching and scrambled towards the first ledge above and a barrage of shots battered from the two men below and out, and a bullet smashed into his left shoulder and spun him falling and he rolled back behind the body of the horse and hitched himself round to hold the rifle with his right hand over it. The sun beat clean and hot upon him and the two men and he lay quiet watching them.

Down and across the level expanse the lean man in the buckskin shirt stepped out from the doorway of the shelter and round the corner for a clear view of the ridge and the body of the horse, small at the distance yet distinct against the rock. His eyes narrowed as he made out the deadliness of the rifle barrel pointing over the body. He walked to the tall grey horse ground-reined in front of the shelter and took his rifle from the saddle.

Quietly, paying no attention to the harnessing of the draught horses to the old wagon, he walked round the other side of the shelter and started back towards the ridge directly behind. He came on tracks, hoofprints in the loose earth heading southwest into distance towards the far lowering of the ridge. He stopped and looked down at these a long moment and moved on and came to the base of the ridge and climbed until he was almost parallel on it to the man behind the body of the horse not quite a half mile away.

He lay flat on a slight levelling of the slope and adjusted the sights on his rifle and pushed the barrel out in front of him and settled into position and waited.

Several shots came from the two men out on the level expanse and the man behind the body of the horse hunched himself forward and up to reply to them and the man in the buckskin shirt tightened his finger on his trigger in a slow steady squeeze.

He saw the man behind the body of the horse jerk convulsively and try to rise and fall forward over the body of the horse and lie still. He saw the two men out on the level mount and start

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towards the ridge. He stood up and walked towards the shelter.

The wagon was ready. Two of the saddled horses were tied behind it and a blanket had been rigged over the wagon body for shade. Under it lay the man and the woman from inside the shelter. The little girl, small and shrinking and silent, sat on the seat between two of the other men.

"Take it easy but aimin' for time," the man in the buckskin shirt said. "Hit for the trace then towards town. Maybe the doc'll meet you part way."

The draught team, fresh and strong, leaned into the harness and the traces tightened and the wagon moved away. The man in the buckskin shirt turned to watch the two men who had ridden to the ridge approach leading their horses. An old battered saddle and a bridle hung bouncing from the saddle horn of one of the horses. The body of a man, short and thick with a brass-studded cartridge belt round its waist, hung limply over the saddle of the other horse.

"Did you get it?" said the man in the buckskin shirt.

"Yes," said one of the men. "In the saddlebag there."

The man in the buckskin shirt stepped forward and bent to slip a shoulder close against the saddle up under the body of the man in the brass-studded belt and lifted it away and went and heaved it over the saddle of the tall grey horse.

He stepped into the shelter and came out carrying a spade in one hand. He took the reins of the tall grey horse with the other hand and led it away.

Head low, staring at the ground before him, he led it past the corral, across the almost dry stream bed, and stopped at last by the straggling row of stunted cottonwoods.

He looked up. The other men had followed him.

"Don't be a fool," one of the other men said. "Drag him out somewheres and let the buzzards and coyotes have him. He wasn't no more'n an animal himself."

"No," the man in the buckskin shirt said. He looked back past the shelter, on into the vast empty distance where the trail of a tired horse led north-eastward towards the far lowering of the ridge and returned. "He was a murderin' thievin' son-of-a-bitch. But he was a man."

Quietly, bending to the hot task in the clean sun, the man in the buckskin shirt struck the spade into the red-brown earth.

NEEDLESS TO SAY!

An egotist is a man who is always me deep in conversation.

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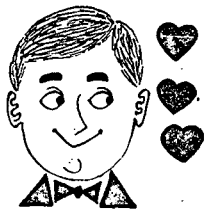
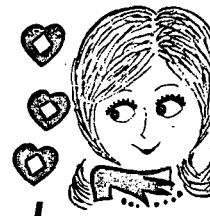


A Girl's Best Friend



A woman, like the Koh-i-noor,
Mounts to the price that's put on her.

COVENTRY PATMORE

Facet and Loos

So the French veecount is going to call up in the morning but I am not going to see him again. Because French gentlemen are really quite deceeving. I mean they take you to quite cute places and they make you feel quite good about yourself and you really seem to have a delightful time but when you get home and come to think it all over, all you have got is a fan that only cost 20 francs and a doll that they gave you away for nothing in a restaurant. I mean a girl has to look out in Paris, or she would have such a good time in Paris that she would not get anywheres. So I really think that American gentlemen are the best after all, because kissing your hand may make you feel very very good but a diamond and safire bracelet lasts forever.

ANITA LOOS, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*

Encore

Valentine: Win her with gifts, if she respect not words:
Dumb jewels often in their silent kind
More than quick words do move a woman's mind.

Duke: But she did scorn a present that I sent her.

Valentine: A woman sometimes scorns what best contents her.
Send her another . . .

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
The Two Gentlemen of Verona

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Show Business

Mother's beaver coat was also a legitimate theatre expense. "You know I wouldn't pay that much money for a coat unless it was to put up a front," she said. It was the same with the diamond rings she bought for June. Mother wore them on one finger, and, as she told Gordon, they were rich-looking and if we ever needed the money, the rings could be pawned. Mother didn't like diamonds. She even thought they were a little vulgar. "But," she said, "they do impress the managers."

GYPSY ROSE LEE, *Gypsy*

Tiffany by Gaslight

So we were engaged. Our troth had been plighted,
Not by moonbeam or starbeam, by fountain or grove,
But in a front parlour, most brilliantly lighted,
Beneath the gas fixtures we whisper'd our love.
Without any romance, or raptures, or sighs,
Without any tears in Miss Flora's blue eyes;
Or blushes, or transports, or such silly actions,
It was one of the quietest business transactions;
With a very small sprinkling of sentiment, if any,
And a very large diamond imported by Tiffany.

WILLIAM ALLEN BUTLER, *Nothing to Wear*

Down Payment

Gigi had obediently broken her friendship with a school friend, Lydia Poret, after the girl had shown her a solitaire, set as a ring, the gift of Baron Ephraim.

"A solitaire!" Madame Alvarez had exclaimed. "For a girl of fifteen! Her mother must be mad!"

"But Grandmamma," pleaded Gigi, "it's not Lydia's fault if the Baron gave it to her!"

"Silence! I'm not blaming the Baron. The Baron knows what is expected of him. But plain common-sense should have told the mother to put the ring in a safe at the Bank while waiting."

"While waiting for what, Grandmamma?"

"To see how things turn out."

"Why not in her jewel-case?"

"Because one never knows. Especially as the Baron is the sort of man who might change his mind."

COLETTE, *Gigi*

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Tim lifted up a diamond necklace and swung it gently to and fro, holding it by one end. With a rippling movement the stones flashed. "Look at the light of it!" he said. "It needs a fine woman's neck to show it off. Let me put it on your wife."

Mor disliked this. It was something Tim often did, and Nan never protested. She came forward now with docility and took off her coat. She was wearing a round-necked summer dress. Tim fixed the diamonds round her neck and stood back to look. The necklace was impressive, but Mor thought it looked out of place. Nan hurried forward to look at herself in the mirror which was fixed behind one of the counters.

"Diamonds have no mercy," said Tim, "they will show up the wearer if they can. But you have nothing to fear from them. A queen is the one who can wear them, and a queen you are." He was looking over her shoulder into the mirror. He often talked in this flowery strain to Nan, but Mor suspected that he was more aware of the jewels than the woman.

"They are dazzling!" said Nan. She took the necklace off and held it in her hand. Then that excitement began to take hold of her which Mor had seen come upon her in the past in Tim Burke's shop. An animation which he himself could never seem to inspire glowed in her whole person. She wound the diamonds loosely round her wrist like a bracelet, and began to skip about the shop . . .

IRIS MURDOCH, *The Sandcastle*

If I were rich what would I do? . . .
I'd buy a diamond brooch, a ring,
A chain of gold that I would fling
Around her neck . . . Ah, what an itch,
If I were rich!

JAMES STEPHENS, *Why Tomas Cam Was Grumpy*

Stony-hearted

"Perhaps you would prefer the diamonds and the pearls," he went on, pointing disdainfully at the box.

"No, no. I hate them! I hate them all! I will not wear your jewels. You have no right to think that I am that kind of woman," she cried hysterically.

"You do not like them? Bon Dieu! None of the other women ever refused them. On the contrary, they never could get enough," he said with a laugh.

E. M. HULL, *The Sheik*

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CLEAN SWEEP

"Everything has been worked out," he said. "It's foolproof."

BY MIKE MARMER

HERBERT Wiggam stood in the doorway, one thin hand gripping a bowler hat and rolled umbrella, the other resting on the knob of the half-closed door.

" I'm leaving, Mother," he called back into the early morning stillness.

" Have a nice day." The voice from the back bedroom was sweet but spiritless. " You won't be late tonight, will you, dear? "

" No, Mother."

" Seven o'clock? "

" Seven o'clock," he echoed absently, his eyes sweeping the living-room.

He felt curiously moved. I shall miss all of this, he thought, taking in the graceful Hepplewhite furniture, the satinwood breakfront which housed his mother's painstaking collection of Wedgwood and Minton ware, the knickknack shelf in the corner, supporting an astonishing variety of free-blown glass miniatures.

It had once been a proud room, each piece burnished and gleaming, reflecting the morning's light. But now everything was faded and shabby and tired, even as his mother seemed faded and shabby and tired. A widow since the war, she had taken a job and, as Herbert's salary was small, she had never given it up.

He called a gentle good-bye to the shuffling, dressing-gowned figure just disappearing into the kitchen. He waited for the familiar, " Good-bye, dear," then clicked the door shut behind him.

Herbert entered, and pressed the " G " button of the ancient lift scarred with the names of countless teenagers who had made this groaning, perilous descent for generations. Only his own name was missing, he thought wistfully. He had lived in this block of flats for thirty of his forty years and had never found the boldness to scratch even his initials into the rust-flecked green paint.

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Fingering the flat gold penknife at the end of the watchchain which spanned his pigeon chest, he found himself struck with a sudden impulse. But natural timidity and observance of order brought the hand out of the waistcoat pocket—empty. He sighed; he would never have another chance.

For Herbert Wiggam, a prim, narrow-shouldered man of regular, unexciting habits, who allowed himself only a single secret smile as he stepped out into the morning sunshine, planned to steal a quarter of a million pounds before the day was through.

This morning, as usual, Herbert sat in the Underground train. His newspaper was neatly folded into quarters, his eyes were myopically trying to make out the print.

At the Bank station, the tube disgorged Herbert and the numberless cousins of his bowler, umbrella, and dark serge suit. He walked a short distance and entered a grey-faced building, nodding to a uniformed commissionaire at the entrance. He took the lift up and, at the top floor, got out. He stood for a long moment in front of a frosted-glass door which bore the legend:

H. TUPPER & SONS
ESTABLISHED 1848
MEMBERS OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE
STOCK AND SHARE BROKERS

He followed a corridor and pushed through a swing door to the general office. Hardly glancing at the huge blackboard upon which were chalked the securities and bonds quotations at the close of the previous day's market, he went into a small clinical room. There were half a dozen desks, a cluster of files, and a cagelike window in one wall. Herbert's desk was set apart from the others, attesting to his clerical seniority after twenty-three years with H. Tupper and Sons.

Within a few minutes of each other and of nine o'clock, the occupants of the other desks filed in. Frisbee, tall and gaunt, with only two years less service than Herbert, nodded laconically and slid into his chair. Miss Pomfritt, a well-endowed young woman of thirty, added a final touch to her make-up as she eased behind her desk, close to the panelled door which led into the private office of Sylvester Tupper, the senior partner. She was followed in close order by two junior clerks named Cranshaw and Lowe and, finally, by Laurence Westbrook, son of Mrs. Sylvester Tupper's favourite sister.

Young Westbrook arrived just in time to be greeted by a baleful glance from his uncle, who had stepped from the inner office to count heads. Satisfied that everyone was present and,

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excluding his nephew, hard at work, Tupper signalled Miss Pomfritt to follow him back inside.

At ten-thirty Miss Pomfritt emerged from Sylvester Tupper's office, touching a hand to a few awry strands of hair at the nape of her upswept coiffure. She was hardly winded from the daily pursuit round Tupper's desk, and Herbert noted that seven years as secretary to the senior partner had honed her agility to a fine edge.

Tupper himself, portly and pompous, came out shortly afterwards and stepped up to Herbert's desk.

"Good morning, Wiggam," he greeted him with an artificial smile. "Everything going smoothly?"

"Just fine, Mr. Tupper," Herbert replied.

"This is *the* Friday, you know. That special bond transfer is arriving this afternoon. You'll handle this transaction yourself, of course. Rather an important lot, all negotiable. We'll deposit them in the night vault downstairs."

Herbert nodded, then his eyes narrowed as Laurence Westbrook was suddenly at Tupper's side.

"Uncle Sylvester," he said obsequiously. "Perhaps this would be a good time for me to take on duties a little more important than the ones I now have."

Sylvester Tupper turned to Herbert. "What do you think, Wiggam?"

Assistance on this particular transaction was the last thing Herbert wanted, so he offered his best seniority-laden look. "I don't know, Mr. Tupper. They *are* my responsibility. After all, they are bearer bonds, and the interest coupons can be cashed at any bank without identification, and—"

"Quite right," Sylvester Tupper cut in.

The nephew muttered darkly and went back to his desk.

After Sylvester Tupper had squeezed out another artificial smile and returned to his office, Herbert gazed casually round the room. Noting that he was unobserved, he reached for the telephone on his desk and made three calls in rapid succession. The first, to his mother, was part of the regular morning ritual. The second, which he conducted in a low but businesslike tone, confirmed a luncheon appointment at a small cafeteria in the City. The third, in which he managed to disguise his voice admirably, was to a Mr. Smollet of Harbinger & Durand, a firm of brokers on the floor directly beneath H. Tupper & Sons.

Replacing the receiver on its cradle, he unlocked the centre drawer of his desk and withdrew a bundle of oblong-shaped receipts. They were all blank, and had been obtained with

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meticulous care over the past month from the same firm which was to make the delivery that afternoon.

Herbert began to fill in the receipts, copying the required names and serial numbers from a neat, typewritten list which he removed stealthily from a waistcoat pocket.

When the wall clock showed noon, he had almost completed the packet of forged receipts. Slipping them back into the centre drawer, he locked it and went to the wooden coat tree in the corner, from which he took his jacket and hat.

He made his way out of the lift and into the street, covered two hundred yards at a brisk pace, and entered a small self-service cafeteria. Making his modest selections, he balanced the tray of food and threaded his way to a table occupied by two men. One was small with a ferret face and a thin sharp nose; the other was burly with bushy eyebrows and a heavy lantern jaw.

Herbert addressed his luncheon companions as Mr. Webster and Mr. Brand. However, they were better known to the police as Louie Webster and Muggsy Brand, a pair of fringe underworld characters whom Herbert had managed to unearth after a diligent three-week search through the seamier pubs of the City.

Between bites of his chicken sandwich, Herbert explained the reason for his urgent summons, and when he mentioned the size of the haul, his two companions stared at each other, stunned.

Herbert took a sip from his glass of milk, then patted his lips with a paper napkin. "There's no danger whatsoever," he said. "Everything has been worked out to the last detail. It's foolproof." He hunched himself forward and outlined the first phase of the plan.

It was neat and precise, involving a step-by-step timetable. Herbert covered the clerical staff's early leavetaking on Fridays; Louie and Muggsy's appointment with Mr. Smollet downstairs, ostensibly for investment advice, and their subsequent departure for the Fire Exit staircase; and Miss Pomfritt's unvarying habit of leaving her desk for five minutes before closing time to apply her street make-up. During her absence, the robbery would take place.

It was to be a simple operation. When Herbert entered the senior partner's office with the bonds, Louie and Muggsy would push in right behind him. They would display guns, grab the bonds, and hit Sylvester Tupper on the head, just hard enough to put him out of commission. Then they would tap Herbert, much more lightly, merely for the record. No one, he warned solemnly, must be hurt.

The two hoodlums nodded. They had been following the plan

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with mute admiration. Only when the next step revealed an alarm, which signalled the guards on the main floor and automatically locked all exits, was the rapt silence broken.

"Hold it!" Louie cut in sharply. "If the Pomfritt dame comes back too soon, we're in trouble."

"Yeah," added Muggsy. "The appointment with Smollet gives us a legit reason for being in the building. But, if we're searched, they'll find the bonds."

"No, they won't!" Herbert announced triumphantly. "Because you won't have the bonds!"

Two pairs of eyebrows shot up.

"That," declared Herbert, "is the last detail of the plan."

He beckoned them closer. "Now, listen carefully. When you leave the office after the robbery, you will drop the two packages into my wastebasket. I will leave some scrap paper on the edge of the desk, which you can sweep into the basket to cover up the bonds. You will then proceed to the Fire Exit staircase, remove your masks, and walk down to the floor below. From there, you will take the lift to the ground floor."

"Gotcha," said Muggsy eagerly. "If the alarm does go off, we're clean. Right?"

"Right."

"Not so right," said Louie. "How do the bonds get out of the building?"

"Simple. The police will question me and naturally find me innocent; after all, I am a trusted employee. When they have left, I will remove the bonds from the wastebasket, slip them into my briefcase, and depart unmolested with the spoils!" Herbert's voice ended on a proud note.

"Well, now, ain't that something," Muggsy gloated. "We pull off a quarter of a million pound bond job and don't even take the chance of getting caught with the stuff."

Louie was a little more practical minded. "How much can we peddle these bonds off for? You said they're easy to cash."

A dreamy look flitted across the clerk's face. "A cautious man could go to some foreign country, clip the interest coupons as they come due, and live very nicely on an income of nearly ten thousand a year."

The dreamy look disappeared abruptly. "But, of course, you gentlemen are hardly the cautious type. The sale of the bonds should realise about a hundred thousand, I would say. Now—are we all clear on the timetable?"

The three men put their heads together and repeated the schedule, step by step. When they finished, Herbert stood up and squared the bowler hat on his head.

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"Good-bye, gentlemen," he said gravely. "Until we meet again—at four-fifty-eight."

As he walked to the door of the cafeteria, he paused for a moment; then, on sudden impulse, he tilted the bowler to a more rakish angle and stepped jauntily out into the street . . .

The early afternoon, like the early morning, was routine. Herbert dispatched more messengers, counted more securities, compared more moneys, and every chance he could, he worked quietly at his desk, adding to the growing stack of forged receipts.

He had just completed them at three-thirty when the special bonds arrived. Mildly surprised at his own composure, Herbert accepted the bonds through the cage window, arranged for a cup of coffee for the uniformed messenger, and went to his desk. It was then that Laurence Westbrook gave Herbert his second anxious moment.

As Herbert was making every pretence of checking and signing for the consignment, he was suddenly joined by the young man. Westbrook stood above him, arms folded across his chest, neck craned.

"I hope you don't mind my looking over your shoulder," he said acidly. "I just want to see how a responsible man works."

Only when his uncle unexpectedly poked his head out of the office did Westbrook scurry back to his own duties.

"Will you be finished by five, Wiggam?" the senior partner called to him.

"Perhaps a few minutes earlier," Herbert answered and, as Tupper's door closed, Herbert effected the switch, turning the counterfeit receipts over to the messenger.

At four o'clock, he uttered a silent prayer that Louie and Muggsy had arrived at Harbinger & Durand, and were absorbing some needless financial advice from the guileless Mr. Smollet.

By four-fifteen, he had a large yellow sheet spread across the desk and was making the forged entries in their proper squares. A glowering Laurence Westbrook had already left for the week-end, followed shortly by the two young clerks, Cranshaw and Lowe, and finally by the gaunt Frisbee.

Herbert carefully checked and rechecked the entries against his secret list which was derived from serial numbers of bonds credited to the personal account of Sylvester Tupper. It might be five or even ten years before Mr. Tupper would have any need for them, so the serial numbers for which the police would be keeping a lookout would be lying in Tupper's safe-deposit all the while.

When Herbert finished, he checked the time again and was

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startled to discover it to be four-fifty-five, the moment when Louie and Muggsy were scheduled to leave the brokers' office downstairs, and Miss Pomfritt was due to perform her afternoon make-up ritual.

True to form, the secretary took a voluminous handbag from a side drawer and headed for the washroom, tossing an absent smile as she passed. Herbert returned it, a little less absently perhaps.

Quickly, he moved his wastebasket to the most advantageous position and carefully laid a dozen or so sheets of scrap paper at the edge of the desk, partly hanging over the basket. He stepped back to survey the scene; it was perfect. He slipped heavy rubber bands round the two stacks of bonds, compressing them into tight packets. One more look at the clock. It was four-fifty-eight, the time when Louie and Muggsy should be stepping into view.

He closed his eyes tightly, then opened them slowly, almost fearfully. As if by magic, two masked figures appeared in the doorway. Herbert's knees almost buckled from relief.

The robbery went precisely according to plan and, from his prone position, Herbert watched as the bonds were dropped into his wastebasket, papers slid off the desk to cover them, and two pairs of trousered legs ran off.

They were replaced in short order by a pair of shapely, nylon-clad ones, and Miss Pomfritt's scream resounded from the walls.

It was almost an hour later when the beefy, redfaced police sergeant had finished questioning Miss Pomfritt and Sylvester Tupper and turned his attention to Herbert.

The senior partner had a large bandage round his head and was being comforted by his secretary. Herbert, seated in his own chair, wore a small patch on his forehead.

"So you can't describe the holdup men, either, Mr. Wiggam," said the sergeant as he sat on the edge of Herbert's desk, legs dangling.

"No, sir," replied Herbert. "It was just as Mr. Tupper said: one was big and husky, the other was short and thin. They both wore masks."

The sergeant held a list of numbers in his hand. "And this is a complete list of the stolen bonds?"

"Yes, sir. I took the liberty of compiling it while we were waiting for you."

"Good thinking. It will help us identify the bonds when they show up." He put the list down on the desk.

"Will you need us any longer?" asked Sylvester Tupper.

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"No, I don't think so. I have a few more questions for Mr. Wiggam here, and that should do it."

"Then we'll take our leave." Leaning a little more heavily on Miss Pomfritt than his injury required, Tupper made his way out of the door.

The sergeant twisted back to Herbert. As the questions were snapped out and answered, Herbert noted with growing concern that the policeman's foot was swinging back and forth, narrowly missing the wastebasket each time.

The concern turned to anxiety and the anxiety to anguish as, with a *thonk*, the foot made contact.

The wastebasket teetered, tilted, and, just as it seemed about to topple over, rocked, wobbled, and finally settled back to normal.

Herbert stared down, then compressed his lids tightly, trying to blot out the sight. *One of the bundles of bonds was now exposed among the scrap paper!*

As the sergeant got up and looked speculatively towards Tupper's office, Herbert stealthily elbowed the remaining papers from the desk and into the basket.

"What's this?" barked the sergeant, spinning suddenly. He reached into the wastebasket and began removing the top layers of paper. Tiny beads of perspiration popped out on Herbert's upper lip. The sergeant straightened up.

"You almost threw the serial numbers away," he said in mild rebuke, waving the list. "Now, let's take one more look at the scene of the crime."

As he was being led towards Mr. Tupper's office, Herbert glanced back over his shoulder, just as a large sack on a trolley was being pushed into the room. Behind the trolley shuffled a listless form, deep lines of weariness etched into its aged face.

Following Herbert's gaze, the sergeant muttered, "It's just the cleaner," and pulled the clerk into the office.

Even as the sergeant and two uniformed policemen re-enacted the crime with him, Herbert, his pulse pounding, could hear the sound of a duster being flicked over the desks and the metallic *clank* of wastebaskets being lifted and their contents dumped into the sack.

When they emerged from Tupper's office, Herbert stepped quickly back to his desk and looked down.

The wastebasket was empty.

His eyes followed the back of the cleaning woman as she manœuvred her trolley through the door and out into the corridor.

It took another half hour before the sergeant wound up the

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investigation to his satisfaction and led the way to the lift and then out into the street.

Herbert felt mild shock that the buildings and pavements were still bathed in light; the last few hours had seemed like an eternity. He refused the offer of a ride home, saying that he preferred to walk a bit first. The sergeant thanked him again for the list of serial numbers, and the police car roared off.

The moment it disappeared from sight, Herbert sprinted to the corner, where he hailed a passing taxi. He gave the driver his destination, told him to hurry, and settled back into the seat, trying to catch his breath.

As the taxi pulled up at the airport, Herbert got out and went immediately to the passenger loading area. A loudspeaker was blaring, " Last call for Rio de Janeiro, Flight 706. Please follow the red light."

Glancing up at the airline clock, Herbert saw the time was seven o'clock; exactly twelve hours since he had risen from bed that morning.

Reaching the departure lounge, he walked up to a tiny figure in a black coat and flowered pillbox hat. Occupied with two suitcases, the woman had her back towards him. Herbert tapped her on the shoulder.

" I'm right on time, Mother," he said.

" That's fine, dear." The voice was still as sweet, and it had lost some of the dispirited air. " Did everything go all right? "

" Yes, Mother, right down to the last detail."

" That's nice, dear."

Herbert picked up the two suitcases and, as they walked out to the plane, he smiled gently. The lines of weariness seemed less deeply etched in his mother's face. And her step seemed less shuffling than it had been just an hour ago, when she finished her last day as office cleaner for H. Tupper and Sons.

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD

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Across. 1, *Onomatopoeia.* 9, *Present.* 10, *Arrests.* 11, *Near.* 12, *Leggy.* 13, *Peel.* 16, *Heehaws.* 17, *Stepson.* 18, *Mothers.* 21, *Gondola.* 23, *Iris.* 24, *Got on.* 25, *Stoa.* 28, *Neither.* 29, *Tantara.* 30, *Electric blue.*

Down. 1, *Operate.* 2, *Odes.* 3, *Actress.* 4, *Oranges.* 5, *Oars.* 6, *Insteps.* 7, *Open champions.* 8, *As blind as a bat.* 14, *Rates.* 15, *Penny.* 19, *Trivial.* 20, *Scourer.* 21, *Gnostic.* 22, *Outrage.* 26, *Chic.* 27, *Anil.*

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A Fine Caballero

By KEN HARDMAN

AYE, this senorita says to me, ' Sixteen for the room an' forty for meself.' "

The listening boy sliced his egg carefully, watching the sluggish golden yolk flow around the blade of his knife to make a plump brown island of the steak. A shaft of brilliant sunlight from the porthole lay across his naked shoulder and spilt on to the messroom table in a flurry of dancing dust motes.

" So I says, ' Right you are, me darlin'—' an' me with no more than thirty pesos in me pocket. Pass the butter, kid, will ya? "

The boy laid down his knife with a clatter and reached for the dish, swilling drops of oily melted butter over the edge of it in his eagerness to pass it along the line of seated, sweating men.

" Careful, kid," the big man with the tattooed arms said gently. " Butter don't stay solid long in this heat. Why the hell they can't put her port side to the quay, I don't know. We wouldn't get the afternoon sun on the messrooms then."

" What happened with the senorita then, Paddy? " a voice asked, indistinct through a forkful of chips.

Paddy poured a thin yellow stream from the dish on to a slice of bread, spreading it quickly before it soaked through in the one spot. The lurid red-and-green snake on his forearm wriggled like a live thing swimming in the rivulets of sweat.

" Well, we got sorted out in the end. She cussed me a bit when we got the room an' she found I'd only fourteen pesos left. But like I said to her, fourteen is better than nothin'. She wouldn't 'ave got anyone else at that time o' night."

" You'll be bringing bad weather on us, doing one of the girls like that." The man at the top end of the table spoke half seriously, but there was a trace of banter in his voice. " Y'know what they say—always pay your woman if you want a good passage."

" Aye." Paddy grinned. He pushed away his empty plate and leaned back in the chair.

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The boy shifted uneasily in his seat. Streaks of sweat crept down the pale gold of his skin and joined in a glistening rim above the waistband of his shorts, but he was not thinking about the heat. He stared at the Irishman's broad, good-humoured face, trying to reconcile what he knew about the man with the fact that he had cheated a woman, and even boasted about it.

"What's up, young Alan?" Paddy looked back at him, smiling gently.

The boy dropped his eyes, flushing. "Nothing," he mumbled, stabbing at the steak with his fork. "It's just that—well, I was wondering what she wanted the money for—the senorita, I mean."

The small clinking noises of cutlery died away to a silence that deepened the flush on the boy's face; the silence of eleven men staring at him in amusement before bursting into roars of laughter. It had all happened many times before.

"I don't mean what she wanted you to pay her for—I know that," he stumbled on before the laughter erupted. "I mean, what would she have done with the money—" He stopped, not knowing how to put his thoughts into words.

Deprived of the main meat of the joke, the men grinned at each other and went back to their eating. "You don't half get some queer notions, laddie," one of them said. "Who cares what she would've done with it?"

"Hang on." Paddy held up a hand as big as his empty plate. "I think I know what the lad is getting at. An' it's very commendable too; very commendable." He savoured the word, his eyes never leaving the boy's bent head. "You reckon that this senorita might've had a sick old mother or some such good cause, an' she was goin' with me just to get money to pay the rent or sump'n. Is that it, Alan?"

The boy looked up quickly, startled at the accuracy of the big man's guess. A row of grinning faces looked back at him, with Paddy's face a large quiet island of understanding in the middle of them.

"Something like that," the boy said. He sawed away at his steak with a great show of concentration, listening to the ripple of laughter that whipped round the table.

"Wait a minute, lads." Paddy's voice was mildly reproachful. "Some kids do think things like that, y'know; 'specially if they're brought up good. A few o' you must've felt that way yourselves at one time, sure you have. At his age, everythin' is either black or white, see. A man's either a knight in shinin' armour or a dirty villain—there ain't any in-between. An' a woman—well, there's no such thing as a bad woman. How old are you, Alan? Just sixteen, is it?"

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The boy nodded dumbly. A few months ago, sixteen years of age had seemed a glorious maturity; the time when he would get his first ship and be away down the broad muddy river to the great world beyond. But now, among these men with the burnt skins and whipcord bodies, he knew he was still a child.

"Aye, it's a good time o' life," Paddy said slowly. He gazed unseeingly at his plate for a moment, then stood up, wiping the sweat from his eyes. "Finished your tea, have you, lad? C'mon, let's get out o' this oven an' up on deck. This crowd o' gannets will be here all night."

A tiny evening breeze ruffled the boy's fair hair as he stepped out of the accommodation doorway, throwing a mantle of coolness over his slim shoulders. He stood still for a moment, his head thrown back in sensual pleasure. The orange rim of the sun caught briefly at his eyes before it slanted behind the concrete dock sheds, leaving the small square of planked poop-deck in the shade. He walked slowly aft to where Paddy was sitting on one of a pair of mooring bitts.

"Sit down, lad." The Irishman pointed with his pipe-stem to the other bitt. "Best time o' day this, I always say. Just after the sun's gone down."

The boy nodded. "Yes. It is pretty nice, isn't it?"

But as he spoke he was aware that there was something stilted in the way the words came out. The big man was no longer the friendly spinner of yarns he had known during the long voyage from home. He was also a cheat. He sat down, feeling the sun-heated steel warm beneath him. Where his shorts ended, the heat was almost too much to bear; he thrust his hands beneath his bare legs, casting round in his mind for something to say, something that would bring back the old carefree relationship between them.

"Where did you meet this girl, then?" he said at last.

Paddy regarded the boy quizzically. "In the Ranchito—that little bar near the dock gate. Now look here, Alan—" he scratched his head, suddenly embarrassed—"you don't want to go takin' on so over a little thing like that. It's a bit o' game we play, see; the girls an' us. They tries to cane us for as much as we have, an' we tries to cut it down a bit. Not a game for you to be playin', mind you—you got to keep clear o' women an' drink for a while yet. But us older fellers as ain't married back home likes to play around a bit now an' then, see. It's only natural."

He tilted his head towards the darkening sky, watching the boy out of the corner of his eye. Alan's forehead was creased with the transparency of his thoughts, and Paddy bit on his pipe-

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stem, waiting; he was the very devil to argue with, this idealistic kid. Fact was, most of the time he was dead right.

"What was her name?" Alan asked suddenly. A plan had presented itself to him with startling clarity. Now he knew what he must do to sort out all this lot. Paddy had been drunk last night and had not known what he was doing.

"Her name?" The big man was puzzled. "Let's see—sump'n like pillow—Pilar, yes, that was it—Pilar. Why?"

"I just wondered." The boy stood up, smiling. "You aren't going there tonight, are you?"

"No. What fool idea have you got into your head now?"

The boy looked surprised. "I haven't any ideas, Paddy, honest." He stretched his arms above his head, yawning. "Reckon I'd better go and get washed. I want to go to the pictures tonight. See you."

Frowning, Paddy watched him go. Sure as eggs, the kid was up to something, but he couldn't think what. After a few moments he shrugged; there was nothing he could do. The lad was sensible enough to look after himself.

The night air was cool and fresh after the heat of the day, and the boy sniffed it eagerly as he walked between the dark bulk of the dock sheds towards the gate. All the mysterious smells of a strange land were bound together in the elusive breath of breeze which brushed his smooth scrubbed face and played round the collar of his open-necked shirt. The pungency of cooking-oil and roasting coffee blended with the fragrance of a thousand miles of pampas beyond the small town, and the boy's imagination leapt ahead of him like an excited deer.

He passed through the small lighted square of the dock gate, eyeing the two lounging policemen a little apprehensively; they had huge pistols strapped to their waists, and the look of men who wouldn't hesitate to use them. The taller of the two muttered something to his companion and they both laughed loudly, their dark eyes following the boy into the street.

His face burning, the boy hurried on over the uneven pavement flanking the narrow unmade road. For the first time he began to feel nervous about what he was going to do; perhaps it wouldn't be as easy as he had thought. His hand tightened on the small roll of peso bills in the pocket of his blue dungarees and the feel of them gave him confidence. It shouldn't take very long; then he could carry on to the cinema.

At the first street corner ahead of him, a single electric bulb picked out the faded red lettering of the bar sign: EL RANCHITO. Beneath the sign, a black rectangle of open doorway cut into the

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pale stucco wall. The boy's steps faltered, and for a moment he was almost glad: there didn't seem to be any life about the place. Perhaps it was closed. He walked hesitantly right up to the doorway and peered inside.

At first he didn't see anything; the smell of stale tobacco, wine, and cheap perfume hit him in the face like a solid thing. Then he made out a faint yellow light at the far end of what appeared to be a passage leading into the building from the entrance doorway.

At that moment his courage almost failed him. The place had a brooding evilness about it which was entirely outside his experience. His lips tightened, and the stubbornness in him mounted until his feet moved slowly but determinedly towards the yellow light.

He was barely halfway along the passage when he heard the rapid tap of footsteps; a figure appeared out of the light, first as a thick black shadow, then materialising into a girl with a mass of black hair and the carriage of a queen. She stopped just outside the lighted doorway, her arms akimbo.

"Si?" she called.

The boy stopped, paralysed. It was obvious that she couldn't see him properly; the passage was too dark. "Er—" he said at last—"I'm looking for a senorita called Pilar. Is she here, please?" The language barrier hadn't occurred to him until now.

"Ah, Ingles," the girl muttered. Then she said more loudly, "Come forward, please. In here." She turned and went back into the lighted room.

The boy gave a small sigh of relief; at least she spoke English. He followed her quickly.

The light seemed much stronger after the darkness of the passage. He blinked, looking round the big bare room. A dozen or so tables were scattered about the uneven mosaic floor, each with its trio of spindly chairs. A bar ran the length of one wall, and behind the counter an old woman rocked in a huge high-winged chair, looking at him with black-button eyes. The girl still had her back to him as she walked across to her table.

"You are early," she called over her shoulder. "No one is here yet." She turned in a flare of white pleated skirt.

In the silence that followed, the boy heard the faint squeak of the rocking chair, and it seemed to him that it was the only sound in the world.

"Nombre de Dios," the girl breathed. "What is this? You are a baby—a child." She sank down into one of the chairs, her pretty mouth slightly open.

His temper flared suddenly. "I'm not a child!" he shouted.

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THE
BEST
NEW
STORIES

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His voice rose and cracked, and he swallowed hard. "I want to see Senorita Pilar, please," he finished lamely.

The girl leaned back in the chair and took a cigarette from the packet on the table. "So?" she said. The light from the match caught an answering flash of amusement in her eyes. "And what for do you want to see Senorita Pilar?"

"I have a message for her." The boy did not know what to do with his hands; they fluttered like agitated birds in and out of his pockets, behind his back and into his pockets again.

"Ah!" The girl's face cleared. "Why did not you say? What is it, please?"

"I'll tell her when I see her," he said, his jaw setting in a firm line.

"I am Pilar Felosco," the girl said. "No more girl called Pilar come here. Now, what is it?"

"Oh!" He flushed in embarrassment; the climax had arrived sooner than he had expected. This girl didn't look in the least like the kind of woman he had imagined. She was proud and beautiful, like a film star. He stared at his feet.

"W—well," he stammered, "the man who was with you last night did not give you enough money. I have brought the rest—here—" he brought the crumpled roll of pesos from his pocket—"twenty-six pesos. That's right, isn't it?"

For the second time, the girl's lips parted in surprise.

"Paddee send it?" she asked incredulously, stretching out a slim brown arm.

"Well," the boy said again, "not exactly. But there it is, anyway." He thrust the money into her hand. "Good-bye now." He turned to go.

"Wait." She looked at the money, turning over the corners of the notes idly. "I do not understand." A small frown ridged her forehead. "The money—who send it, then?"

He turned back, shuffling his feet impatiently. Why couldn't she just take the money? All these questions confused him. "I—I just got it," he said at last. "It's yours now."

He looked into the girl's dark, liquid eyes and his heart began to thump painfully. She gazed at him in silence for a long moment and her expression changed slowly. "I think the money is yours," she said gently. "Why you give it to me?"

He started to get angry; everyone seemed to see through his schemes so easily. "Paddy's a good bloke," he burst out. "He couldn't have meant to cheat you. I thought that if I gave you the money, everything would be all right." He pushed his hand through his unruly hair, feeling the dampness of his forehead.

"So." She laid the money carefully on the table and stubbed

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out her half-smoked cigarette, never taking her eyes from his face. An expression which was almost awe touched her features and dissolved into two shining pinpoints of tears in the corners of her eyes.

"You are very good, my child," she said huskily. "Si, Paddee is a good man, maybe. He is big and gentle, but he had spend all his money on the drink. I know. It happen all the time; but he has a friend such as you. Maria." She turned her head towards the old woman behind the bar and burst into a flood of Spanish.

The old woman got up from her chair and hobbled over to the table. She placed a gnarled hand on the girl's shoulder and peered at the boy, her head cocked to one side like a bird's. After a while she nodded slowly, answering the girl in a single sentence.

Impulsively the girl thrust the money into the old woman's hand. "I give it to Maria," she said simply. "She has much trouble. She just say, if all men were like you, what a good place the world would be."

He caught at the word "men" and his chest swelled in a great surge of pride. He stopped fidgeting and the flush died slowly from his cheeks. "I must go now," he said.

"Where you go now, eh?" the girl asked.

"To the pictures—the cinema." Shocked at his own audacity, he went on in a reckless rush, "Would you like to come?"

She stood up, tall and breathtakingly lovely. "It is a long time since I go to the cinema with such a fine caballero," she said gravely.

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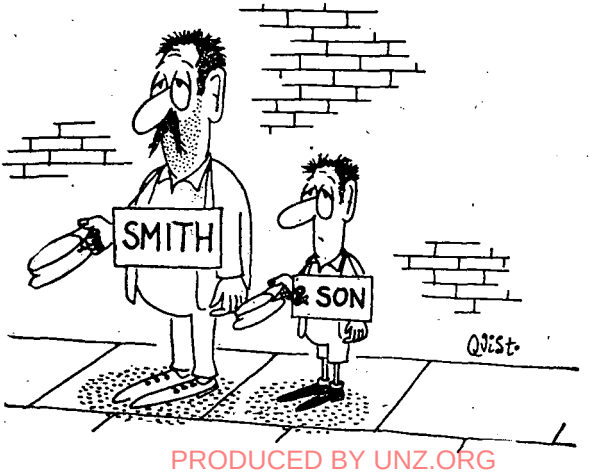

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Sharply—in a sudden spasm of fear—she knew him . . . With such a man one walked on the edge of violence

BREAKAWAY

THE girl came back from the front door of the cottage holding the letter in her hand. It was addressed to her. She went into the kitchen and automatically removed the kettle from the range where it was boiling, a plume of steam whistling into the room. She looked at the letter, turning it over in her hand, as though she were reluctant to open it.

She was a tallish girl, twenty-one, with a long slim figure that her green cotton frock showed to advantage. Against the green of her frock her fair hair was, even in the gloom of the kitchen, a pale flame. She was good-looking, but her face had character, too—a calm, sensible face, the face of a girl who knew her own mind and often spoke it, and a face, too, that was full of a quiet kindness.

She sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette. She smoked for a moment or two, the letter lying before her unopened. As she sat there a shadow passed quickly across the sunlit frame of the kitchen window. Before she could move, the latch of the back door was clicked up and the door opened. She stood up, surprised, one hand automatically gathering up the letter and slipping it into the pocket of her dress.

The door shut, and a man stood inside. He leaned back against the door, breathing hard, and just for a moment his eyes closed. He was a big man, well into his thirties, and there was a two-day growth of stubble on his face. His brown hair was uncombed and he looked rough and hard and, now, as his eyes took her in, ruthless.

"You live here?" The accent was not of this part of the country, not an island accent. North, she thought.

"Yes."

By VICTOR CANNING

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"Alone?"
"No. With my father."
"Where is he?"
"He's at work."
"When does he come back?"
"This evening. At six."
"Anyone else in the house?"
"No."

She saw his big shoulders relax, the tension go out of him. He came to the table and sat down. Seeing her cigarettes and matches lying there, he lit himself a cigarette. He saw her watching him and gave a little laugh.

"You know what I am?"

She nodded. The prison shirt and trousers, all regulation, were familiar to her, to everyone on the island.

"Then don't let's have any nonsense. No nonsense—no trouble. First of all, I want a cup of tea and something to eat. I've been two days, lying out in the forest there. Ever tried lying out in a stinking forest two days? No, of course you haven't. And I don't recommend it."

She realised that the sudden burst of talk was tension still going from him. She turned and slid the kettle back on the range and said over her shoulder, "There's eggs and bacon."

"Three, and two rashers. I could eat a horse."

She began to prepare him some food. As she worked she knew that he was watching her, knew that his eyes were on her bare arms and legs, on the movement of her body inside the green frock. She was afraid because she was sensible, but she did not show it. Some of them had been in that place for ten years. Ten years, walled up . . .

Behind her, he said, "What does your father do?"

"He's a carpenter."

"Is he now? I was a bricklayer, until . . . until everything blew up inside my head. Just like that, it was. One day my head blew up. You're going to be a good girl, aren't you? No nonsense. The moment people try nonsense with me, my head blows up. Otherwise I'm O.K. Get it?"

She turned and put the food in front of him. When he saw the teapot and the cup and saucer, he gave his dry half laugh again and said, "Pour it out. Haven't had a woman pour tea for me in years."

She poured out the tea and said, her voice calm against her inner fears, "How many lumps?"

"Three."

She put in the sugar for him and stepped back from the

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table. He began to eat and drink quickly, looking up at her now and again, but while the meal was before him she seemed to have no real existence for him. It was the first time she had watched a hungry man, a really hungry man, eat, and there was something desperate about it which only increased her fear.

When he had finished, he pushed the things away from him roughly so that the cup toppled sideways in its saucer. He lit himself another cigarette and leaned back in his chair. For a while he watched her in silence. Then, abruptly, he said, "You got nice eyes. Nice blue. What time does the next ferry go?"

She looked at the kitchen clock. It said five minutes past nine "Every hour," she said. "The next is at ten. But—"

"But what?" he interrupted fiercely. "I'd never make it? Not in broad daylight, dressed like this?"

She nodded.

"We can fix that. How much money have you got?"

"About five pounds."

"I'll have to have it. Yes, I'll have to have it. Not that I'm a thief, mind you. No—" the half laugh came again—"far worse than that. Now let's see . . ." He tipped farther back in his chair and blew cigarette smoke towards the ceiling. "I got to wash and shave and I need clothes. Your old man ought to have some that'll do. Then the ferry's five miles away. How do the buses go?"

"There's one at twenty to ten which catches the ferry. From outside the door here."

"Good. Come on, show me where the bathroom is."

She led the way out of the kitchen to the bathroom at the head of the cottage stairs. He kept the door open and made her stand in the passageway where he could see her in the wall mirror.

"No nonsense, eh? Remember."

He stripped his shirt and washed, and then shaved with her father's cut-throat razor. The sight of the razor in his hand made her close her eyes sharply against a sudden sick spasm of fear. Her commonsense told her that with such a man, one walked on the edge of violence. One wrong word and—what had he said?—his head would burst.

He began to whistle gently as he dried his face, and he turned towards her and said, "I feel good. Yes, I feel good." He ran a hand appreciatively over his shaven chin. Then, coming to the door, he stopped and looked at her, his big bulk close to her.

She knew what was in his mind and she met his eyes with all the frankness she could muster, saying, "You don't want to miss that bus. The clothes are in here."

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She moved towards a bedroom and, after a moment's hesitation, he followed. When he entered the room he went past her and jerked open the doors of the old-fashioned wardrobe. Some of her father's clothes hung in it. He slid them along the rail and then reached for a hanger and brought it out into the light.

"What's this?"

"You can see what it is." For the first time she mildly opposed herself to him, but he did not seem to notice.

"I can. I certainly can." A battledress jacket and a pair of khaki-coloured trousers hung from the hanger. He slung them across the bed. "Whose are they?"

"Jim's."

"Jim's?" He was examining the flashes on the sleeve of the jacket. "What's this?"

"He's a sergeant. Regular."

"And about my size. That's luck. Hullo, what's this?" As he spoke his hands had gone through the pockets of the jacket and he pulled out a flat book. "His paybook, eh?"

"He was here on leave. He's gone off sailing for a few days."

He opened the book. "Sergeant Alton. Who's he? Your boyfriend?"

"Yes."

He gave his dry laugh again. "Well, he isn't any longer. I'm going to be Sergeant Alton. That's a turn up. I walk out like a regular sergeant. Uniform. Paybook. Name, rank, and number. I could play poker with the bloody warders and they wouldn't look beyond the uniform. You deserve a kiss for that, my girl."

He whirled on her suddenly and took her in his arms and put his lips to hers. For a few moments there was nothing she could do while his mouth stifled hers and his hands moved over her body. Then, as he held her from him, her eyes blazed and she reached up and smacked him across the face. For a moment she thought he was going to lift her and throw her across the bed, but suddenly his hands relaxed and fell from her shoulders.

"Don't do that again," he said thickly.

"Then behave yourself. I'm helping you, aren't I? I haven't given you any nonsense. You've got everything you want to get off the island. You're the one who's playing with nonsense."

"You've got guts," he said. "You don't know what guts you got. I killed a woman once for doing just that. Just that. Smacking me across the face . . ."

She said, "The bus leaves in ten minutes."

"So it does. But don't think I'm going to leave you here.

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The moment I'd gone you'd be on the phone, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know."

"That's it. You don't know. That's why you're putting on your hat and coming with me. Jim Alton and his girlfriend, a bus ride, and then over the ferry we go. When we get to the other side, I'm going to stay with you until the ferry starts back. You're going to be on it and I'll wave you good-bye. It'll be an hour before it gets back here, an hour before you can do anything. That's all I need, a trip to the mainland and an hour's grace. Fair enough? No nonsense?"

She nodded weakly. And that's how it was. He made no further attempt to touch her. He took the money she had in the house and they caught the bus together.

At the ferry there were a couple of warders and a policeman on duty, but they took no notice of the sergeant and his girlfriend going aboard. An hour took them to the mainland and he stood with her, not talking much, on the quayside until the ferry was ready to leave.

Before she went aboard, he said, "Keep your mouth shut until you get back. Understand?"

She nodded and turned away from him.

He watched the ferry draw away and, when it was a hundred yards out, he turned and walked up the street, making his way to the station. He bought a ticket for London and went on to the platform.

As he stood at the bookstall buying a paper two military policemen came up to him. They were pleasant, one of them a sergeant like himself, but they were efficient. When he said that he was returning to his unit from leave, the sergeant asked to see his paybook. He handed it over without qualms. The sergeant leafed through it and then cocked an eye at him.

"You're a cool one, aren't you, Sergeant Alton?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just that you've been on the deserters' list for the last six months."

They jumped for him as he turned to run. He was thrown flat on his face on the platform and a policeman came running up to help.

As they led him away, the girl was still on the ferry, the estuary wind fanning the skirts of her dress, and the opened letter on her lap. Three sentences in it had made her face shine with happiness.

You're right, my love, about facing the music being the only way. I've had enough of this hole-and-corner life and I'm giving myself up tomorrow. I love you. Jim.

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Scruffy, wickedest ape on the Rock, is in disgrace after a glorious rampage in Gib; but Tim Bailey, Officer in Charge of Apes, and his right-hand man. Lovejoy, are both on the side of the reprobate . . .

Scruffy

By PAUL GALLICO

ALFONSO T. RAMIREZ, who was some forty years of age and an expert employed in the Navy Yard at Gibraltar, was the possessor of two secrets, one of them safely and securely buried, the other unfortunately somewhat more vulnerable.

The one that was to remain secure from prying eyes, even through the most severe wartime security check, had to do with his middle initial. Alfonso T. Ramirez was his name, and if you asked him what the T stood for, he would have told you Tomaso for good St. Thomas, and so indeed it was inscribed upon his birth certificate.

His well-kept secret was that the T actually didn't stand for Tomaso, but for Treugang, a name as German as the *Nibelungenlied.* And at heart Mr. Ramirez was a Nazi.

Ramirez lived alone in two rooms off Calle Mendoza where he cooked his own meals on a single electric hotplate, and had no friends, although there were plenty of neighbours.

Now for the last few years he had been buoyed up by a secret satisfaction, the philosophy of the Nazis. It didn't matter how you looked or what people thought of you; if the blood of the master race flowed in your veins, then you were a master man. Some of these magic corpuscles were locked into his system and made him one of them.

It was none other than the notorious ape Scruffy who, after his morning's orgy of damage, climaxed that catastrophic day by penetrating and exposing the second secret of Mr. Alfonso T-for-Treugang Ramirez.

Scruffy's siesta could last anywhere between two and three

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Gibraltar Disclaimer

Old Gibraltar hands will, no doubt, amuse themselves trying to identify the characters in this book and associate them with persons they have known. This pastime I must hasten to inform them and all others so disposed will be a waste of energy since never during the war was I within a thousand miles of Gibraltar.

It was therefore quite impossible for me to base any of these characters upon any persons dwelling, serving, or in office there at the time. If there is any resemblance to any such person it is entirely accidental and unintentional, as all characters, situations, and events in this story are fictitious.

There is only one demonstrable fact in this otherwise total work of fiction and that is that on the 25th August, 1944, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, caused a signal to be sent expressing his anxiety over disquieting rumours concerning the welfare of the Barbary apes in Gibraltar and the wish that they should not be allowed to die out. And on the 8th September of the same year a second directive to the effect that every effort should be made to restore the establishment of the apes to the number of twenty-four, and that this should be maintained thereafter.

So much for the truth. All that follows is nothing but the wildest imagination.

P. W. Gallico

hours, depending upon the heat of the day and how active he had been in the morning. At half past five that hot afternoon he awakened, yawned, stretched, scratched himself, and proceeded to confound the scientists, learned men, and animal psychologists by remembering that he had had a bang-up time that morning. Simultaneously he also knew by the automatic timer that he carried in his stomach, or somewhere within his unprepossessing person, that it was an hour past his feeding time.

He therefore went off at a skip and a jump to Prince Ferdinand's Battery to find that Gunner Lovejoy had already delivered their rations, and that in Scruffy's absence the pack had disposed of most of them. He took a desultory nibble at a carrot end lying on the ground, then chucked it at the tin sign warning tourists

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not to feed the apes, scored a ringing bull's-eye, and was off. The need for food and the recollection of what fun he had had a short time ago decided him to return to town.

He reached King Charles V Wall and descended at a speed that could truly be compared to that of lightning, without ever seeming to try and with a kind of gliding motion that made his great body seem to flow along the stones as though he were skimming over the surface without touching it. He arrived at the foot of the wall just as Treugang Ramirez emerged from the Admiral Nelson.

There was still the width of the town separating the two, and each, unaware of the other, proceeded inexorably towards their encounter.

The street where Ramirez lived was in that part of the old town close to the towering cliff of the Rock where the houses looked as though they had been built helter-skelter upon one another. It was a kind of monkey paradise since there were clothes-lines and clothes-poles crisscrossing the thoroughfare, and affixed to the cornices of a building was a traffic sign surmounted by a triangle.

Arrived there, Scruffy found that this triangle suited him admirably. He wedged his thick body into it. There is no doubt that any picture looks better framed and Scruffy was no exception —it gave him a kind of patriarchal elder statesman look—and he sat there letting himself be admired.

Ramirez now came striding into this picture. He found a crowd gathered round, blocking the entrance to his domicile, children leaping up and down and pointing, women carrying babies in their arms, men stretching their necks, and above his head a large and ugly Barbary ape framed in the crossroads sign.

Ramirez paused for an instant to look up. His small mouth pursed into an expression of distaste, the pasty white brow beneath his fine upstanding haircut knitted in a frown. He uttered an exclamation of disgust which sounded like " Pfeugh," and commenced to thrust his way through the crowd of children and grown-ups barring his door.

One would not say that Scruffy understood the word " Pfeugh," but he did feel that a jarring note had suddenly marred the harmony of the pleasant sensation he had been creating. Also, since he was an animal, he was equipped with that sharp instinct which at once recognised that the newcomer was unquestionably one of those who differed from the rest of the human pack, and he felt the hostility of the others towards him. Vicariously it excited him and started adrenalins discharging into his bloodstream. This called for action, and with wonderful accuracy he swooped from his frame on to the shoulders of Ramirez. To steady himself he anchored ten strong fingers, at the end of which were ten equally powerful black claws, in Ramirez's hair.

All the pent-up fury which had not been able to escape through the o of Ramirez's mouth now did so in one large yell followed by a torrent of Spanish and English expletive. With this he raised his two stubby arms and punched Scruffy in the flanks.

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This was war, and Scruffy liked nothing better. With a glad cough indicative of accepting the challenge he dug in hard with his toes, and with all the strength of his powerful body yanked with both hands, and the next moment found himself for the first time in his life off balance, as not only Ramirez's hair, but apparently his entire scalp, came away in his paws.

He dropped to the ground where, phoenix-like, he recovered strength and balance and in one tremendous leap hurled himself skyward, regaining the top of the crossroads sign with his trophy.

His previous outcry was nothing to the yell of rage and anguish now torn from poor Ramirez as he stood in the glare of the late setting sun, his head as nude and white as a peeled onion, his secret bared to all his neighbours. Treugang Ramirez was as bald as an ostrich egg.

Simultaneously a roar of laughter went up from the crowd in the street, a roar compounded of both amusement and gratification and one that increased to a pitch of hysteria as little girls and boys pointed to the fearfully nude head and others to the hairpiece or toupee—more vulgarly known as arug—in the grasp of the ape.

All the pent-up dislike of the neighbourhood for Ramirez now exploded in wave after wave of laughter and hardened in the unhappy core of the victim such a knot of hatred as only a total and violent vengeance could ever dissolve. But of all this he was to be aware only later. Now he was just a thoroughly ridiculous little man with an obscenely nude head, thick glasses, and stubby arms and legs, leaping up and down in the street and shouting.

Through all this hullabaloo, Scruffy was in such an ecstasy of delight as can come to a Barbary ape, or any kind of monkey, but once in a lifetime. For in some mysterious manner, he had secured a treasure beyond his wildest dreams: a soft thing of fur all his own, to have and to hold. No Red Indian ever was more thrilled at having lifted a rare and desirable scalp, though of course he didn't consider it as a scalp, or for that matter even as a trophy. In fact he no longer connected it even with the blob of white beneath him, leaping up and down and making noises. He had lost interest in him and in the rest of the people in his enrapturement with his very own and private " thing."

It is known, though not exactly why, that Macaques and other monkeys as well will cherish something like a small bit of fur and carry it around with them. Zoologists have attested that they are not particular or too delicate in the origin of this bit of fur, which makes a most attractive combined mascot and toy.

Ignoring the turmoil beneath him, Scruffy now gave his undivided attention to his prize and noticed with increasing satisfaction that it had every qualification calculated to give pleasure. It was large. It appeared to be resilient and strong when tested, and it was equipped with long and agreeably bristling hair, hair of the texture almost of Scruffy's own. He clutched it to his bosom, he held it to his face, he cuddled it tenderly in his arms.

It has been recorded that Scruffy hated mankind, he hated his

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own species and when he encountered himself in a mirror he hated himself as well. Yet there is no kind of cerebral creature that walks, crawls, or flies that is not at some time imbued with some kind of affection for something.

Scruffy had met his grand passion in Alfonso T. Ramirez's rug.

"Give me back my hair! Give me back my hair!" shouted Ramirez, and began to clamber up the cornice of the building to retrieve his toupee.

Scruffy waited until the white disc of Treugang's face, which might have looked to him like the full moon rising from the sea, was level with him. He then spat with unerring accuracy into his eye, or rather on to his spectacle lens, and took off from there.

Using the one hand, and with the other clutching to his breast his new love, Scruffy abandoned his traffic sign, got himself some bounce off the top of a clothes-line, swung up to the second storey window, thence on to a gutter pipe of the roof and away, a figure diminishing in the distance until he was lost to sight.

Treugang Ramirez was now left clinging to the cornice stones, halfway up to the crossroads sign, minus every last shred of whatever dignity he had ever possessed, while from below him arose renewed jeers, shouts of laughter, and hoots of joy. This was a day which would never be forgotten in the Calle Mendoza.

Gunner Lovejoy had twenty years of experience with the Rock apes behind him, nine of them in close contact with Scruffy. He had raised him from an apelet, and there was not a single thing about this monkey that he didn't know and understand.

Lovejoy soon recognised that Scruffy was so enamoured of his acquisition that if allowed to retain it, the Rock, or at least that portion of it which had suffered in the past from the ape's depredations, was in for a long period of peace. The wig was probably strongly constructed and, consisting of inorganic matter, would not be subject to decomposition. It could be counted on to last for a long time, keeping Scruffy in a felicitous state for perhaps as much as half a year.

This was the dilemma with which the Gunner found himself face to face. On the one hand he could have a go at retrieving this object and get this ugly looking bespectacled specimen, and his eventual connections with the Navy, off his neck. On the other hand he was in a position to assure himself and all connected with him a long period of armistice as far as Scruffy was concerned.

The Gunner was intelligent enough to recognise that this problem was too great a one for him to cope with. That was why they had officers in the Army. And so having stalled off Ramirez for the night, he took it at once to Captain Timothy Bailey, the Officer in Charge of Apes.

"You're sure?" Tim said, captivated by the prospect the Gunner held out to him. Even gaining a few months would be worth it.

"I'd bet me 'ead on it, sir," the Gunner replied. "You should

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have seen 'im, sir, lovin' away at it like it was his fancy on a Saturday night. I know the signs; 'e'll be as good as gold as long as it lasts." He reflected for a moment and then continued. "On the other 'and, sir, there's no gainsaying that this Ramirez chap's a narsty bit o' work, I know the type. He'll go on and on keeping the place in an uproar, and besides he works in Captain Russell's department. I've checked on that, sir. He really seems to be one of their best men."

Tim nodded and thought hard. He said, "You've done well, Lovejoy." A solution struck him. "Look here," he said, "how much do you think one of those things would cost?"

"I wouldn't know, sir. Matter of fifteen quid maybe."

"Let me have that list we're putting through for damages."

The Gunner handed it to him. A gleam came into his eyes.

"Oh I say, sir," he said, "that's a brainwave. Tell 'em it's impossible for us to recover his bleeding 'airpiece and let the Crown pay for a new one."

"They'll thank me for it in the long run," Tim said. "And after all he did pinch it. There'll be such a yell when they see this list they probably won't even notice the item for the wig. You find out for me what it will cost for another and we'll bung it through and hope for the best."

The Gunner nodded, murmuring, "Old Scruff won't 'alf be pleased. You should see him carrying on with that thing."

"Well then, that settles it," Tim said. "Get on with it." He took a ten shilling note from his pocket and slid it across the desk to the Gunner. "That's for using your loaf," he said. "Have a couple on me and Scruffy. To peace and quiet."

And so it was done. The toupee it seemed was the work of a gifted wigmaker in Algeciras who was not only a speedy worker but reasonable, and the replacement came to no more than £13 18s. 6d. and was delivered within a week. Tim had proved right, and so appalled were the Government accountants at the damages they had to O.K. for Scruffy's rampages that the item of the wig was never even questioned.

Ramirez declared himself as satisfied with the arrangements since no better could be arrived at and Lovejoy had convinced him it was impossible to retrieve the original article. In a sense he had scored off the British. He had got himself noticed and his property replaced. Still, the incident left its scar, and Ramirez, having prepared a carefully-devised plan, was waiting only for the right opportunity to put it into effect and have his revenge on Scruffy.

One morning, soon after the fall of France, Captain Bailey was waiting to see the Brigadier.

"Captain Bailey's next, sir," the Brigade Major announced.

"Bailey?"

"He's been bothering me to give him some time for weeks, sir. I knew that you didn't—well, I put him down for five minutes."

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The alarm bell within the Brigadier rang. "Bailey," he said. "You mean that damn monkey fellow? Look here, Quennel, I haven't— "

"He also has the best gun crews on the Rock, sir. They are at the top again."

"Oh! Very well. I'll see him."

When Tim came in, looking smart and respectful as an officer should, the Brigadier was inclined to let him have the benefit of the doubt and gave him a civil good morning. But he also glanced at the clock on his desk and said, "Captain Quennel has allotted you five minutes, which we will say begins as of now. I suggest you state what you wish to see me about."

"The apes, sir," said Tim without hesitation.

Brigadier Gaskell sat quietly and made no reply.

"There have been no provisions at all made for them," Tim continued, encouraged by the silence. "Everything and everyone else has been covered either by regulation, plan, or executive order for all contingencies and emergencies, except them, sir."

The Brigadier maintained his silence, but he picked up a paper-knife and played with it.

"I know they've been given identity cards and ration books," Tim went on, "but I'll get to that in a moment. It isn't that the ration is insufficient, only that it is the wrong kind. They haven't been getting what they need and what they're used to. Gunner Lovejoy says you can see their condition is going off already. You can tell by their coats, sir, and they get coughs and things more quickly."

The Brigadier's eyes strayed to the clock.

"But it is really about the concrete shelters that I have come, and the steel for the cages. I have drawn up the plans, but I won't bother you with them now. There's the target practice, which they can't stand—their eardrums, sir, they're not like ours—and of course there will be bombs sooner or later, and if the Germans—I mean the Spanish—well, we all know, sir, it could get very sticky, and where would they go? If they were driven away from their usual haunts by bombardment, they might even desert the Rock altogether and get over to the mainland."

The Brigadier now withdrew his eyes from the clock and fastened them upon Captain Bailey, and allowed the unspoken thought, "Would that be bad?" to be plainly registered upon his countenance.

"Well, sir," Tim resumed, "if the apes *did* leave the Rock or were all killed off and it got around among the men—well, you know how they are, sir, about legends and superstitions and things, and just at the time when you'd most want them to stand fast, they'd be thinking about the apes deserting or dying out . . ."

The look of interest that had settled upon the Brigadier's face at the thought that the apes might be wiped out or disappear for good was now replaced by one of distaste and cold annoyance.

"The way I have worked it out," Tim explained, suddenly

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anxious that time was running out, " is that with a couple of hundred cubic feet of concrete and a half a ton of steel wire I could manage shelters that would not only be bombproof but practically soundproof as well; the cages would be to protect the females and their young after breeding— " Time *was* running out and he rattled on with his plan.

Gaskell finally did hold up his hand.

Then he said with amazing calmness, " You have asked me for concrete, Captain Bailey," and here his calmness suddenly abandoned him as the word triggered his own despair. " Concrete! " and he slammed a fist down upon his desk. " Concrete which I have begged for, pleaded for, humiliated myself for! I need concrete for shelters for my soldiers, Captain Bailey, for bombproofs for civilians, for dumps, first-aid dressing-stations, and hospitals! Can you picture how sorely I need concrete, Captain Bailey? Aircraft, guns, food, and ammunition, and steel and everything needed to make this vulnerable sitting-duck that we are defensible? And I am getting none.

" And as for superstition, Captain Bailey, may I point out that we are no longer living in the Dark Ages. You will hardly wish to sit there and tell me that our position here is dependent upon the behaviour of these monkeys or what happens to them."

There was no room left for reply, for the Brigadier returned once more to that ominous calm which Tim felt was far more difficult than if he had blown his top.

" Let me suggest, Captain Bailey," he concluded, " that you continue to carry out your duties in connection with these brutes as best you may in the circumstances, and if you ever again refer to them in my presence, or if you should be so unfortunate as to have them called to my attention again in any way, shape, manner, or form, you will bitterly regret it. That is all, Captain Bailey."

The time, the place, and the occasion for Ramirez's revenge were supplied by none other than the Governor, though behind him, or rather behind the event, was a psychological warfare boffin, a certain Major Clyde.

The Major's name didn't even appear in the orders that came from London for the Governor to show the flag on the Rock at a kind of Army Day parade and review to celebrate the defence of Gibraltar during the great siege against the Spanish and French in 1779 by General Sir George Eliott. The Governor fixed the day of celebration by decree. Ceremonies were devised to take place in the square before General Eliott's monument, an hour-long parade scheduled, flags ordered out, review stands set up, and all in all a rousing show organised that would bring every man, woman, and child either into the reviewing square or along the route of procession.

And this, of course, provided exactly the opportunity sought for by Mr. Ramirez. On that occasion and during that time there would be not a soul anywhere in the vicinity of Prince Ferdinand's

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Battery or Queen's Gate Road where the ape-packs hung out.

The day could not have dawned more beautifully for the event. The sky presented its most enticing southern blue. Gibraltar was a mass of red, white, and blue bunting, Union Jacks, and the colours and flags of regiments and Services. The streets and the square were black with people, among them the Spanish workmen for whom after all the show was being staged. Gibraltar was never gayer or more feverish with crowds and music and colour.

The high officials augmented by Admiral French, the General, the Brigadier, and the Group Captain attended by their staffs and aides decked out in all their finery of uniform, medals, gold lace, and cords, were ensconced in the reviewing stand. In the distance, with a crashing of cymbals and the glitter of sunlight upon the yellow brass of instruments, a band burst into Pomp and Circumstance March Number One. At the same time a far-off cheer arose from the throats of the spectators. The dignitaries in the reviewing stand stopped their neighbourly chatting and stiffened into proper attitudes. The parade had begun. And on the upper Rock, unhurried, unmolested, Alfonso T. Ramirez was going about the business of getting even.

He was unhurried because at the behest of his German blood he had been quietly efficient and had gone through several dry runs of his scheme for revenge. . .

The wherewithal to accomplish his scheme had faced him one afternoon in the grimy window of a small shop in Algeciras fronting some corrugated iron sheds devoted to the manufacture and sale of fireworks. The Spaniards were always involved in fiestas and historical celebrations that called for cannon fire, jubilant explosions, and rockets in the sky.

Ramirez had come across the obscure little fireworks factory and been brought to a halt by the sight of the object displayed in the window. It was a firework, or what the Americans would call a giant salute or cannon-cracker of truly gargantuan and formidable proportions, and consisted of a shiny blue cardboard cylinder some fifteen centimetres in diameter, Ramirez had estimated, and probably sixty centimetres more or less in height, from the top of which protruded a piece of saltpetre fuse.

In an instant there leapt into the mind of Mr. Ramirez a picture of Scruffy hugging this object to his breast; there would follow an appalling explosion, and when the smoke cleared away one might perhaps find small shreds of hair where the brute had been. It had been a matter of moments to enter the shop and purchase this bomb calculated to pulverise his enemy. . .

Parking his car at the side of Queen's Road, Ramirez looked down into town where he could see the populace collected like black ants along the route of procession. The apes were gathered a slight distance farther up the road, some still nibbling at scraps of the lunch Lovejoy had brought them at midday, some fighting, some scratching or skin picking, some torpid.

In their midst Ramirez saw Scruffy, his old wig still clutched in

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his paw. Rage filled the heart of Ramirez as he saw the object held by the monkey, but it was replaced almost immediately by his little o of a mouth forming itself into rather a horrid smile of joy. According to his schedule, Scruffy had little more than twenty-one minutes left to live.

Mr. Ramirez produced his blue lacquered bomb from the back of his car and, uncoiling the length of its twenty-minute fuse, laid its end carefully in the grass behind his vehicle and walked up the road, concealing it in the shrubbery at the side.

As he approached the apes they became alerted to his presence and sat up regarding him or moving restlessly, all except Scruffy who squatted like an old Pasha eyeing the newcomer and what he carried, calculating no doubt, as always, what was in it for him.

Ramirez now, as he had reckoned, reached the end of the piece of fuse and set the giant firework down on the ground a few yards from the big ape who was watching him out of his golden eyes. Ramirez sat down himself beside the big cannon cracker and held it to his side as though it was something precious and valuable.

For five minutes Ramirez sat there cuddling and nursing the blue firecracker, while from below arose the thump, thump, thump of beaten drums and the crash and blare of martial music. Scruffy watched him.

When Ramirez judged that five minutes had passed he looked at his watch and examined it as though remembering an appointment somewhere, rose, and went off leaving the firecracker poised on the ground behind him.

As he walked away, he saw out of the corner of his eye a lightning-like movement as Scruffy bounced forward, collected the blue cylinder, and held it clutched to him. The coughings, barkings, and scoldings he heard from behind him confirmed the fact that other apes were disputing Scruffy's ownership of this new prize, and that Scruffy was determined to hang on to it whatever the odds.

From their ranks now moved another dog ape by the name of Arthur, Scruffy's only formidable rival for domination of the pack. Arthur wanted the cracker. His whole covetous monkey being was convulsed with jealousy.

There was no yellow in Scruffy. He was never one to decline a good brawl, particularly with Arthur who he felt he could lick with one hand tied behind him. But now his possessions, the old and the new, the wig and the pretty blue thing, posed him a problem. If he put them down or dropped them to take on Arthur, he might lose one or the other or both.

There was a sudden and startling flash of brown fur and glazed blue cardboard as Scruffy solved his dilemma. Pinning back Arthur's ears could wait. What he wanted now was to be alone.

He headed down the road at top speed. But now another and wholly unexpected element manifested itself. He found himself pursued not only by his angry rival and all his friends, but also by a long fire-from-the-wrong-end-spitting snake. This snake, an elongated white ropy thing with sparks and smoke cracking and

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hissing from its tail, was coming after him, and the faster he ran, the faster it came.

With but one thought, to shake it off, he now veered sharply to the left and plunged down King Charles V Wall in the direction of town. On his heels followed Arthur and the gang. They fairly poured down the wall and into town, over roof-tops and the continuation of the wall which led directly to the twin arches of the Old Cannon Gate overlooking the square where at that very moment the military hierarchy, to the strains of the massed bands, was preparing to pay its respects to its illustrious predecessor, General Sir George Eliott.

With a leap and a bound Scruffy was perched atop the arch; and with similar graceful leaps and bounds the pack joined him there. However, the sound of the music and the glitter and colour of the close-packed military, as well as the crowds in the square below, drained all thoughts of battle from Arthur, while Scruffy made the agreeable discovery that the thing which had been pursuing him was not a snake at all, in fact it had practically disappeared. There was something fizzing, cracking, and smelling from the end of his toy, but it appeared not to be bent upon harming him. For the moment he had it, his wig, and all nine points of the law.

It was the combined murmur and laughter of the crowd and the cry of Gunner Lovejoy, " Gord bless me, it's old Scruff. What's that imp of Satan got 'old of now? " that drew the attention of Mr. Ramirez to the event that was about to take place, not only in his presence, but that of the Governor of Gibraltar, his Colonial and military staff, the clergy, the laity, and most of the inhabitants.

Lovejoy was not the only one to be appalled at the tableau. Young Captain Bailey stared aghast, not only at the apparition of Scruffy which in the Captain's lexicon could only spell trouble, but at the object that Scruffy was nursing. For his trained Artillery-man's eye saw at once that it was either a dangerous firework or an even more dangerous dynamite bomb from which depended now no more than a short length of burning fuse which was growing shorter every second.

So horrified was he that he committed the military crime of stepping out of ranks, leaving his appointed place at the head of his Battery, and striding forward into the square over which a stunned and shocked silence had fallen. He called up in anguished tones, " Drop it, Scruffy! I say drop it, old boy! "

But Scruffy had not the slightest intention of doing so; and there was only a matter of five seconds of count-down left for the burning fuse to traverse the last inch and ignite the thing.

The sputtering flame reached the top of the giant cannon cracker, hesitated there for a moment, and then dived down into its innards. For one fraction of a second, while Alfonso T. Ramirez awaited his moment of glory, time seemed to stand still. Thousands of eardrums and nerves quivered in anticipation of the terrible explosion to come.

Instead of the gigantic earsplitting thunderclap expected by one

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and all, there was only a kind of soft " thup " as the top of the blue cardboard cylinder was wafted off, barely missing the nose of old Scruffy who chittered nervously, but showed no other signs of relinquishing his prize.

If there was any black powder in the firework which Ramirez had purchased, it had been limited to an amount just sufficient to displace the lid of the thing and activate a series of powerful springs concealed in the interior.

To the utter enthralment of the apes and the equally hysterical joy of the crowd below, bon-bons, paper hats, whistles, hooters, horns, small toys, coloured handkerchiefs, and everything conceivable in the line of party delights rained down. The thing spewed forth clouds of confetti, uncoiled endless ribbons of coloured paper streamers and small musical instruments.

The square was filled with the braying of party horns, thumping of tin drums, shrilling of whistles, and clamour of toy trumpets. Sweets, biscuits, and further favours were being battled for. The distinguished guests in the reviewing stand were powdered with confetti, their shoulders festooned with coloured streamers.

A good third of the loot erupting from the cylinder fell into the hands of the pack. Paper hats were donned, false noses and moustaches applied, whistles were shrilled, horns were blown or banged, packages of sweets, chocs, and cakes gorged.

But the best had been reserved for the last. The slow match which had been releasing all this bounty finally reached the bottom of the case where it ignited a last half teaspoonful of black powder, and with a " plop " propelled into the air a large flag attached to a parachute. The parachute opened, the flag unfurled and showed itself to be the red and yellow ensign of Franco Spain with the rousing slogan VIVA ESPANA stencilled across one side and ARRIBA FRANCO on the other. There being no wind, the chute descended in exactly the same line, permitting the flag to drape the shoulders of Scruffy upon whom it lay like the mantle of a Cardinal.

He set the tattered wig upon his head where it gave him the aspect of an infernal golliwog, and with his free hand seized the flag from about his shoulders and waved it at the crowd in the square from whom roars of delighted laughter ascended.

Down in the reviewers' stand the Governor turned icily to his aide and said loudly enough for all to hear, " I don't consider that that is funny. . ."

The atmosphere in the office of Brigadier Gaskell was at one and the same time white-heated fury and cold glaring icy anger, and Tim knew that he was for it. Whereas before when the Brigadier had chewed him out over the apes it had been part routine bluster and part the Brigadier enjoying himself letting off steam, this time he was genuinely outraged and angry.

" Captain Bailey."

" Yes, sir."

" You realise that full responsibility for this disgraceful affair rests upon your shoulders as OIC Apes? "

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"Yes, sir."

"Have you any explanation?"

"No, sir."

"There will be an investigation. In the meantime you are no longer Officer in Charge of Apes and if I had my way you would not be officer in charge of anything. You would no longer be an officer at all. I intend to confer with the Judge Advocate to see what charges, if any, can be preferred against you for this humiliating incident. In the meantime you will return to your duties. That is all, Captain Bailey. Dismissed."

"Yes, sir," said Tim numbly.

If one lives for a long time in a doghouse one becomes eventually doghouse-minded. One tends to see all life as through the small lowdown archway of the kennel, and by the time he had news of Felicity French's imminent arrival Tim had all but managed to convince himself that he had lost out on this front as well.

What would Felicity be like? Would she still remember him? Would she want to see him? Or would her brief romance with Tim, an unknown and penniless Artillery officer, be a burden and an embarrassment to Felicity French, the Admiral's daughter? She was almost two years older now and a WRNS officer. She must have encountered dozens of men more attractive, important and eligible than he.

The grapevine had it that when next the Transport *Dart* docked she would have a contingent of WRNS aboard. Hence Tim's presence to meet it. Yet he didn't make himself conspicuous upon the pier, but hung back on the fringe at the far side.

No Felicity, it seemed. Tim raised his fieldglasses again and swept the row of girls lining the rail at the centre of the boat deck. There were two stunners among them: a small girl with dark, glossy hair and sombre, smouldering kind of looks, and a slender blonde with beautifully chiselled features and exquisite complexion. Her hair was lemon-gold in colour, burnished and gleaming from beneath her hat. They were both rare types, and Tim thought with a half smile of the chaos they would create on the Rock. Each had a Naval officer on one side and an Army officer on the other. The Naval officer attending the blonde had the goldleaf of a Commander on his cap and was being solicitous and attentive.

Tim half smiled to himself; the chap looked like a man in love. That kind of beauty frightened Tim. He had never pursued it. It made him feel inadequate. Once more he swept the ranks of the twenty or so Wrens, looking for Felicity.

There then occurred one of those strange and dramatic silences which are so often encountered during a docking, when for no known reason all sound and cries suddenly die away. One can hear the rushing of water from one of the bilge holes in the side, the chuffing of the pushing tugs, and the ring of the engine-room telegraph from the bridge. This silence was shattered by Felicity's

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laugh. Unmistakably the bubbling, pealing laughter came from Felicity, and it at once evoked her, living, vibrant, desirable, as she always had been in Tim's mind.

Once more with eagerness he turned his glasses top-side. He heard the laugh again; he was focused upon the slender, petite, exquisite blonde next to the tall, handsome Commander. Felicity's laugh was coming from her throat. And then Tim saw that it *was* Felicity.

Felicity! But how changed! And not *his* Felicity, this ravishing beauty. It was a Felicity thinned down by hard work and discipline, her hair groomed and shining. But the greatest change had taken place in her features, which had been marred, or rather disguised by the baby fat about which she had never bothered. It had melted away to leave a classic loveliness, finely sculptured nose and lips, and a movingly enchanting line of jaw sweeping from ear to chin.

And now that Tim stared and stared he saw what had always been most surely there, buried beneath the chubbiness, and it terrified him. It set his heart to beating and filled him with a thousand fears and sadnesses and the certainty that this glorious creature was no longer for him. Already she belonged to the tall Commander at her side with whom she was in laughing unison. Something within Tim told him that such a beauty occurred only once or twice in a generation, and by its very uniqueness made the wearer a child of destiny.

He held her in the round field of his glasses and for a moment found himself looking directly into her eyes, those same frank, sweet eyes, but now seemingly enhanced a thousand times, and for an instant he was panic-stricken that she might see and recognise him, not realising that the glasses were hiding his face. Yes, Felicity had returned; but no longer his Felicity. She was lost to him for ever.

He turned and fled into the shadows of the shed and thence out into the street where he climbed into his car and raced off blindly to nowhere as though the furies were after him. . .

It was a week before Felicity's head was above water sufficiently to realise that that amount of time had passed and she had neither seen nor heard from Tim.

What saddened her almost as much as the loss of the man she had thought she loved was his neglect of his manners. For surely by that time Tim would have heard of her arrival. There wasn't a man in Gibraltar who didn't know by then that twenty females, to be permanently stationed among them, had arrived.

Once in a moment of weakness, loneliness, and longing Felicity had picked up the receiver of the telephone and dialled the number of Tim's quarters one evening. A strange voice had replied, " Captain Ducrow speaking," and Felicity had hung up. She laid hold of the service telephone directory with a gesture that was almost savage, and thumbed through it. Well, he *was* on the

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Rock still. There it was: " Captain Timothy Bailey, R.A. office: First Battalion H.Q., Tel. 134. Home: Catchment Road, Point Europa Barracks, Tel. 84-972." But she didn't pick up the telephone again; she only sat looking at the name and thinking. What she knew she had dreaded was that she might have found him in the married barracks.

She put Tim out of her mind; she no longer raised her head and listened when the telephone in the Mount rang. Yet quite unaccountably one afternoon Felicity found herself in her car on the familiar road that led to St. Michael's Hut and the place known as the village of the apes.

She didn't know why she was going, she didn't care. She simply drove. Perhaps Gunner Lovejoy would be there.

Uncertain of herself, thoroughly put out, Felicity left her car and walked up the road to the place where she had first come upon Captain Timothy Bailey of His Majesty's Royal Artillery and Officer in Charge of Apes. This was the small, curved and railed-in concreted enclosure which jutted out slightly over the cliff, and there she saw a familiar figure which made her heart leap.

" Scruffy," cried Felicity. " Oh, dear, dear Scruffy."

The old boy had been sitting there scratching himself and reflecting. He was bored, he was hungry, and he was out of sorts. Scruffy was permanently out of sorts these days, resenting the changed world in which there were no longer tourists who brought him goodies to eat and cameras and fieldglasses to throw over the cliff; where cars no longer parked enabling one to remove the windscreen-wipers and chew the rubber off them; where visits to town no longer paid off in entertainment or illicit nourishment.

Scruffy recognised Felicity at once, whether from voice or smell or because he was a bit sharper than Captain Bailey was beside the point. His amber eyes lit up, his black lips were drawn back from his yellow teeth, and he leapt up and down and coughed and barked and scolded her. The tears were now so close to Felicity's eyes that the big Macaque looked almost beautiful.

" Oh Scruffy dear," she cried, " how good it is to see *someone*." And from force of habit she put her hand into her pocket to see what was there, and found a chocolate bon-bon in silver paper.

She unwrapped it slowly, and as she did so Scruffy came forward. The memory tubes and transistors of his own computer system had this situation taped and Felicity labelled as The Girl Who Always Had Something.

" Come, my darling," crooned Felicity and held out the bon-bon.

Scruffy sidled over, mostly on his behind, and reached with his firm black leathery hands. With one he clutched Felicity's wrist and the other took the praline. He smelled the sweet and, for a second, a look of blissful anticipation crossed his otherwise grumpy features. This was more like it. On the other hand there was no reason to exclude the amenities. He therefore pulled Felicity's wrist towards him and bit her severely in the thumb, then skipped away eight paces clutching his comfit and leaping up and down

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coughing and railing at her. Felicity let out a scream of pain followed by four orthodox Naval curses and one that she made up on the spur of the moment.

And at that instant she found herself possessed of a savage and unreasoning rage against Captain Timothy A. Bailey. It was as though Tim had bitten her. The blood spurted from two deep gashes, one on top, the other on the bottom of the fleshy part of her thumb, but no more freely than the hot tears of anger that came welling from her eyes. Everything that had happened, or had not happened, since her return combined to fuse into one petrol-soaked knot of fury. Scruffy's bite had now set it alight and flaming.

Unmindful of the gore dripping from her wound on to her uniform she ran to her car, climbed in, crashed the gears into place, and went rocketing down the mountain, half crying, half muttering phrases to herself in which things and allusions uncomplimentary were coupled with the name of Timothy Bailey.

She careered through the town taking corners on two wheels, breaking all speed laws in her haste to reach her destination before the heat of the fire which had been kindled should diminish by so much as a single calorie. She wrenched the car off Engineer Road into Europa Road towards the point so that the tyres squealed, hurtled onwards into the bare, tatty area of the barracks, and caught the sign indicating Catchment Road. Her glance peeled off the names over the doors outside the barracks until she glimpsed that of Captain Bailey. She stopped the car which gave vent to an agonised cry of tortured brakes and metal.

The screen door was closed, but the inner door to Captain Bailey's quarters was open. There was a small lamp burning inside and the Captain was seated at his desk in his shirtsleeves.

She roared up to the desk and the astonished Captain, thrust her thumb, still leaking her life's blood, in front of his nose and cried, "Your damn bloody monkey bit me."

Tim rose, knocking over his chair. "Oh my God," he said, "Felicity!" Then he said, "But he's not mine any more," and with a note of despair and pathos that reached right to Felicity's heart, "Felicity, I'm no longer OIC Apes. I'm nothing at all."

"Tim, oh my dear, darling Tim," Felicity wailed. "What have they done to you?" For she recognised something of a broken man. Also she was no longer angry with him for, over his shoulder, on his desk, was the framed photograph of herself, or at least of the person she seemed once to have been.

A large bright red drop of blood fell with an audible splash on to the company report on which Tim had been working and spread out blot-shaped.

"Felicity!"

"Tim, dear Tim!"

They were so close now in one another's arms that they no longer needed to shout, or even to speak, but could whisper their names and terms of endearment into one another's ears.

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"Tim, why didn't you meet me?"

"I did."

"What happened?"

"I was frightened, I ran away."

"Why?"

"You were too beautiful! I couldn't bear it. I was afraid! I'm afraid now." They separated for a moment and looked at one another.

"Don't you know what has happened to you?" Tim asked. "Look." He pointed to a mirror. "Can't you see, it's almost blinding?"

It was enough to make any woman exult, but strangely Felicity felt more like crying at the moment. "Do you mean to say," she said, indicating the photograph, "that you like her more than me? I did it all for you."

Young Captain Bailey looked from the fat girl in the picture to the goddess by his side and at that moment had no answer for her, so storm-tossed were his emotions.

"I'll cross my eyes," Felicity wailed, and proceeded to do so. "I'll cut my hair and stuff pillows in my bosoms until I can fatten up for you again. I'll do anything you ask, Tim, if it will make you happier."

Afterwards Tim said that it was as though a light shining down from heaven had pierced him with the joyous and everlasting revelation that his adored and chubby girl was still there. She had changed her outer appearance and he supposed eventually he would get used to it and be able to regard her without the aid of dark glasses, but within she was still Felicity, funny, droll, dear, kindly, tender Felicity.

He went to pieces then again over his love for her, the hurt she had suffered which he had inflicted, the wound that was bleeding, and the resolving of the pain that he himself had experienced.

They were both covered with her blood by this time, and when he had bandaged her and they had tidied themselves and she had announced that having compromised him by practically assaulting him in his quarters they would have to be married at once, he told her of what had happened to him since she had left and of the events leading to his disgrace and sacking.

"Darling," he said, "I can't let you. I've been dropped so many numbers I'll be a Captain until I'm forty. I've been banished to these quarters. If the C.O. could have knocked a pip off my shoulder, he would have done so. I can't drag you down."

Felicity sat on the edge of the table. Her now long, fine-spun hair was gathered in a bun at the back of her head. Trojan Helen had never looked more beautiful. She said, "You love me, don't you, Tim?"

Tim replied, "Oh my God."

"Well," said Felicity firmly, "that's where we start from . . ."

The wartime marriage of Tim and Felicity was a quiet affair

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conducted in the chapel in the presence of Admiral French, Tim's best man, and a few friends, and Gunner Lovejoy slipping into the rear of the church at the last moment.

Denied the support of his wife who was back in England, and faced with a determined Felicity, the Admiral had not had sufficient stamina to continue his objections. There was no leave granted for a honeymoon. When Tim applied for it his application was turned down. The doghouse was still operating as far as the Army was concerned, except now they were to occupy a kennel built for two, for the married quarters assigned to them were the shabbiest and most rundown located in Outer Siberia. Captain Bailey had been declared beyond the pale and would be maintained there until someone higher up ordered him out of limbo.

None of this affected Felicity whatsoever. She simply moved in with her husband. The honeymoon, a doubtful blessing, was not missed, for they discovered very quickly how genuinely lucky they had been to choose one another, as they now proceeded to fall violently and passionately in love in quite a different way than they had ever dreamed possible.

In the bar of the Admiral Nelson, Gunner Lovejoy, who had taken to Guinness and Malaga wine instead of his usual lime juice, was addressing an enthralled audience that included Ramirez.

"There used to be twenty-six in the Queen's Gate pack," he said. "Who's left now? There's old Scruff, Pat and Tony, Ronnie and Millie, Kathleen, Sally, Judy and three hapelets that don't look like they'd last more'n a couple of days. And it's the same with the Middle Hill bunch. They get the worst of it when there's shooting; they can't stand noise and they just quietly gets a nervous breakdown and dies."

The Gunner now looked round at his audience and queried, "And what am I to do? Knock on the brass's door and say, 'Brigadier, your bleeding hapes are dying off and unless you call off that Lieutenant Barton that you've put in as OIC Apes, there won't be none left'? Not me, chums, I got seven days and another seven from that Lieutenant Barton for laying me hands on a bit of extra rations for me friends—a couple of lettuces and some mouldy carrots and bread. And who put 'im in there with hinstructions to do same? The Brigadier."

And the Gunner, now well lubricated, had a further question to ask of his audience. "What's to happen if the whole blooming lot dies out? What's the Rock going to be like without apes? What 'appens to me job? And what about where it tells what's to become of us British when there's no more apes here? Kicked off the Rock, that's what the Spanish say. Who am I to say that it can't happen? Or you, or you?"

Those singled out by this direct question shook their heads in lugubrious assent.

"If the brass ain't thinking about it, I am," asserted the Gunner. "A legend they calls it, but what's the use of having a legend if

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yer don't live by it? I've given me life to raising and looking after their ruddy apes and there they all are sending it down the drain."

The Gunner's mind suddenly took them back to that morning's tragedy. "Like a daughter she was to me, was Mona. There she was curled up in a thorn tree, her belly blown up like someone took a bicycle pump to her. Her little face looked that natural, I cried like a baby."

Alfonso T. Ramirez drained his glass of beer and set it back upon the bar soundlessly. He stood there regarding it for a moment and then as quietly left. No one saw him go, or would have cared if they had, which was an error. For Mr. Ramirez had been struck with an idea and he was hastening home as quickly as he could to seek the privacy of his four walls and have it out to look at. The idea which had presented itself to him appeared to be foolproof on all counts, and effective as well. Nevertheless he examined it first carefully, from all angles.

It was that he would nominate himself as a secret spy and saboteur for the Third Reich. No one would ever know it but himself. He would inflict serious damage upon the British position in Gibraltar by dealing a heavy blow to their morale, and one which might well lead, or certainly contribute in the end, to the loss of the position.

Gunner Lovejoy had said that the reason for the careful maintenance of the ape packs on the Rock by the Army was because of their being coupled with the legend and superstition that if ever the apes should leave Gibraltar the British would be driven from the Rock. If the Germans could be apprised that attrition had begun in the ape pack, they could use it for propaganda purposes and stir up unrest among the population of this key bastion, which might lead to fear, panic, and eventually defeat.

How to transmit this information without endangering his own watertight security as a loyal Gibraltarian permitted access to Naval secrets or destroying his own incognito? The answer was simple. An anonymous letter. There wasn't even any danger of such a document being found upon his person since he would not write it until he was safely on Spanish soil. There were no restrictions confining the civilian population of Gibraltar to the Rock. Equipped with proper passes and identification, they could cross over into Spain as they wished, provided they returned before the border was closed at night. Ramirez hugged to himself the perfection of his scheme. He put it into effect at once.

Gloomy Gustave came on from the German broadcasting station somewhere in Spain immediately after the six o'clock news. Most of Gibraltar listened to him, the British for laughs or the cathartic effect of his irritating voice upon their livers and systems, and the Gibraltarians from their not too illfounded suspicions that they might not be getting all the news from the British side. Gloomy Gustave spoke in English in a voice that was oiled and buttered with self-satisfaction, righteousness, and doom.

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" Are the days of the British on Gibraltar numbered? Are all you Gibraltarians now groaning under the lash of the perfidious English soon to be free of the imperialist tyrant? *If the deaths that have recently occurred among the Barbary apes of Gibraltar may be taken as a sign, that day is not far off . . .*"

In their quarters where Felicity was clattering in the kitchen and Tim sipping the thimbleful of gin and Italian that was his nightly ration, the Captain, who had been only half listening, brought his head up with a snap and called, " Hoy, love! Hold it for a sec! You'd better come out and hear this."

In his office Major McPherson, who listened nightly with the ears of an intelligence officer, got up from his desk and went over and stood in front of his wireless set to be sure to miss nothing.

And in far off London Major Clyde, the intelligence officer charged with overall responsibility for the area and who from the monitoring room of the BBC listened nightly to the German broadcasts, frowned and settled the earphones of his headset more securely.

Gustave continued: " As is well known on Gibraltar, a legend that when the last of the Barbary apes leaves the Rock the British will be driven from Gibraltar is based upon more than mere superstition, and the British have maintained these monkeys at considerable expense to avoid the fulfilment of this prophecy, even going so far as to appoint an officer of the Royal Artillery to look after their welfare. The British will, of course, deny this, but it can now be revealed that in recent weeks the number of both the ape packs has been reduced by half. There are only thirteen left in the famous Queen's Gate pack and the Middle Hill group is down to twelve. The German and Italian air and naval blockade of Gibraltar has been successful and many of the apes have succumbed to malnutrition and exposure, to diseases resulting from the fact that there is insufficient food.

" At this rate it will not be long before there will be no more apes remaining and freedom-loving Gibraltarians will rejoice with their Spanish brothers that the oppression of British rule is drawing to an end."

Captain Timothy Bailey swore helplessly in front of his wireless set. " That's exactly what I was working to prevent. Oh, damn their stupidity! "

What Major McPherson was thinking, standing in front of his set in his office, was not printable. Out of the blue a new and serious intelligence burden had been landed upon his shoulders. In the first place, swamped by security problems, most of them unsolvable, he had given no thought to the apes for months, had not yet known of their situation. And in the second, even had he known it would not have dawned upon him that the Germans could so quickly turn this information into a damaging and dangerous bit of propaganda. In so confined a community as the Rock, spirit and morale, although intangible, were nevertheless as vulnerable and perilous as the high explosives in the magazines.

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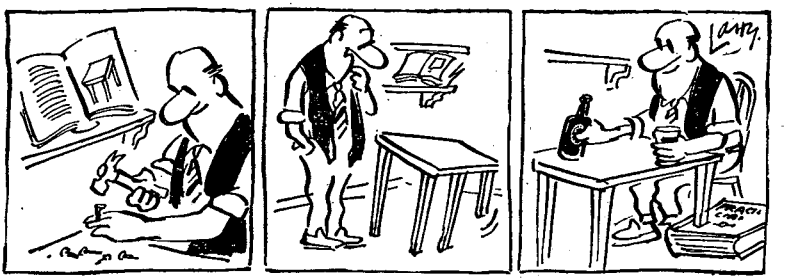

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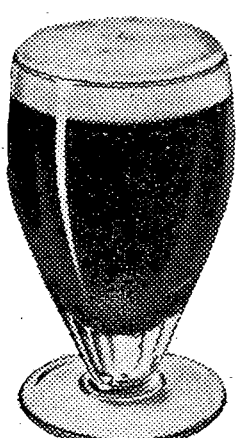

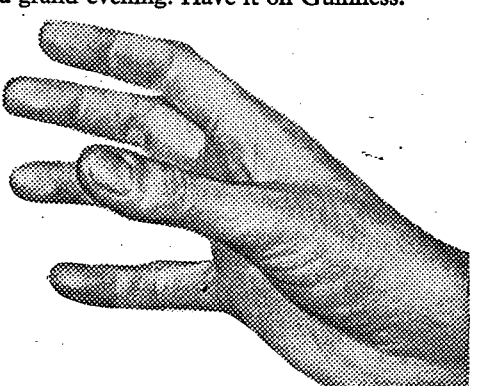

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In the pub Gunner Lovejoy stared at the old, battered wireless box over the bar with an expression of mingled surprise and distaste upon his countenance. "Gord," he exclaimed, "the barstids. How ever did that blighter find that out?"

In London Major Clyde had returned to his office and was re-reading a transcript of the broadcast and pulling at his lower lip. He, in his turn, picked up the telephone. The number he called was a very private one and the person who answered most highly placed. The Major spoke to him using his first name, which was surprising for a mere Major, but less so considering the weight he pulled and the respect in which he was held.

"So I think I'd better get out there, John, don't you?" Major Clyde concluded.

"Yes, I do, Bill. I quite agree with you."

"Will you authorise what is necessary?"

"Yes. See Peter about the flight out. Do you want the P.M. alerted?"

"Not yet, until after I've had a dekko. I'll be off in the morning."

Brigadier J. W. Gaskell, D.S.O., M.C., O.B.E., sat at the desk which at that moment occupied the centre of a shattered world and contemplated the most appalling and disturbing signal that had come to his attention in his entire military career. It was from the Secretary of State to the Governor of Gibraltar. It had been transmitted in top secret cipher and decoded privately by Wren 2nd Officer F. Bailey. On the margin had been scrawled and signed with the Governor's initials, "J.W.G., this came this morning. Your toddler I think. Keep me posted. F.L."

It read as follows:

The Prime Minister has expressed some concern as to welfare of Barbary apes on Gibraltar about which he has heard disquieting rumours. He is most anxious that they should NOT be allowed to die out. I have received direction from the Prime Minister that the establishment of apes should be no less than twenty-four and that every effort should be made to achieve this number as soon as possible and maintaining it as a minimum thereafter. Grateful if you would take steps accordingly and inform me as to the result.

There it lay upon his desk, a single sheet of white bumph, and he sat looking at it as though it were a snake, transfixed and fascinated. Words from the message leapt up from the page and burnt through the bone of his skull into the unhappy grey matter beneath. "Prime Minister," "expresses concern," "disquieting rumours," "NOT be allowed to die out," "every effort should be made." If he had read the communication once he had been through it some dozens of times.

The apes had not been called to his attention for almost a year, ever since he had dismissed Captain Bailey and installed a new OIC Apes. He had successfully got rid of a recurring irritation and if ever a thought of them had intruded upon him he had congratulated himself upon the way in which he had coped.

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And now out of the blue the whole subject of apes was suddenly revived, alive, vibrating, worrying, and at the hands of none other than the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, the director and guiding genius of the Empire and the war. The Prime Minister!

And here as he said the potent and magic name to himself the thoughts of the Brigadier whirled and tumbled and panicked as to what he was to do.

The Brigadier touched a button and, when his secretary appeared, ordered, " Get me Lieutenant Barton."

Ten minutes later Lieutenant Barton, OIC Apes, was ushered in. He was a fresh-faced boy with rosy cheeks and curly hair. He went through the ritual of the greeting salutes and attention as though he meant it, which indeed he did.

" Sit down, Barton," commanded the Brigadier. " Now what's all this about these rotten apes? How many apes are there at present in the Queen's Gate pack? "

" I don't know, sir."

" Why not? "

" I haven't counted them, sir. My report isn't due for another two months, sir."

Major Quennel, the Brigade Major, came in.

" Oh, there you are, Quennel," the Brigadier said. " Have you seen this yet? " He passed him the signal. The aide read it, and as an old and trusted assistant permitted himself a whistle.

" Damnable, what? " the Brigadier said. He turned to young Barton again. " Well, what about their health? Are they in good health or bad? "

" I don't know, sir. I haven't been near— "

Gaskell suddenly looked cunning. " Well," he said, " have you heard any rumours that they weren't feeling too fit perhaps? "

" Only the Nazi broadcast, sir."

The Brigadier was genuinely startled. " The what? " he cried.

" The broadcasts from that German station in Algeciras saying the apes were dying out. I didn't pay any attention to it. Anyway, I thought you'd be pleased."

A sinking feeling differing from his initial bewilderment played with the pit of the Brigadier's stomach. For the first time it began to dawn upon him that there was more behind the message on the desk before him than he had imagined. He turned angrily upon Quennel. " Had you heard those broadcasts, Quennel? "

" Yes, sir."

" Then why wasn't I informed? "

" I thought you'd have heard them yourself, sir, and anyway it was a matter for OIC Apes."

That frightened officer leapt into that breach with all his youth and agility. " You said I wasn't to mention apes to you, sir, not in any circum— "

The Brigadier felt the trap closing in about him and struggled to break the strands. " My God," he said, " I am surrounded by

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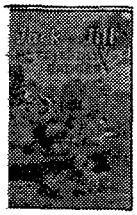

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imbeciles. Barton doesn't know how many apes there are, where they are, whether they are sick or well, alive or dead."

Major Quennel said soothingly, "Why don't you have a word with Gunner Lovejoy, sir? He knows all about them."

"Get him then," the Brigadier ordered, "and quickly."

When the Gunner, who had never been called before such high brass, appeared, Brigadier Gaskell said, "Stand easy, Lovejoy. I want you to answer some questions. How many apes are there in the Queen's Gate pack?"

"Nine, sir. There's old Scruff, Pat, Tony, Helen, Pansy—"

"Never mind the names. Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"How many were there originally?"

For one instant the eyes of Gunner Lovejoy shifted to OIC Apes Barton and back again, and now the young Lieutenant knew that he was really in for it. He was to be squeezed between top and bottom for doing what he had been told was his duty and carrying out his orders.

"Originally, sir? Originally when?"

"Well, whenever you like; or say, when Lieutenant Barton took over."

"Twenty-six, sir."

The sinking feeling returned to the Brigadier's centre. "And the Middle Hill pack?"

"Eleven, sir—no, ten. I found Martha dead this morning."

"Martha?" queried the Brigadier.

"She was Bill's wife, sir, or rather he had his eye on her, when she moved over to Alf. Bill took it 'ard. There was a blood row. Martha got herself in the middle of it."

The Brigadier was nearing the boiling point once more. "Who the devil are you talking about, Lovejoy?"

"The apes, sir."

The Brigadier exhaled a long breath. "Ten down from what?"

"Twenty-four, sir."

"Why? What's been happening?"

"Lot of sickness, sir. We've had some bad storms. Not getting enough to eat, sir. Malnutrition! Weakens 'em. Along comes a big wet and down they go."

"Look here," said Gaskell, "that won't do. Why don't you feed them properly?"

The Gunner's eyes went to Lieutenant Barton again. The Subaltern, although he was learning fast, was both a gentleman as well as an officer. He said, "Not enough food for them on rations, sir. Lovejoy there used to scrounge the rest. I caught him at it and put a stop to it. Seven days' punishment. You said—"

Brigadier Gaskell thought that if he heard the phrase "you said" once more the top of his head would blow off. If the Gunner's information and calculations were correct he was five filthy beasts off what the Prime Minister had laid down as minimum

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He said to Lovejoy, "Don't they—ah—breed? I thought monkeys were always—"

"No, sir," replied the Gunner. "It's just exploration, sir, in a way of speaking. The females don't come on until the winter, about a month from the middle of December through January."

"What's the gestation period?"

"About six months, sir."

The Brigadier did some rapid calculations in his head. Three months to fertility, after which if every male did his duty and was on target, one might reasonably expect the Prime Minister's quota to be reached by the following June or July.

The Gunner, who had seen the Brigadier's lips moving as he did his mental mathematics, dashed these hopes very quickly. "There's not enough females, sir," he said. "It wants about eight to ten females to one male for proper breeding. You lose a lot of them young hapelets anyway. I've had 'em stillborn or killed in fights."

"Well," said Gaskell, "get some more females then. The Prime Minister wants the apes kept up to strength."

"Get them from where, sir?"

The net was closing in indeed. The Brigadier threw what almost might have been interpreted as a despairing glance at his OIC Apes, but young Barton, who had been badly bruised, was not having any.

"I don't know, sir," he put in. "I just thought they sort of were here all the time, or came through a tunnel."

The Brigadier was too beaten even to permit himself the luxury of a fury. "Very well," he said. "Double ration for the time being. I'll speak to the Quartermaster. That will be all."

Outside the office Lovejoy pinched himself, unbelieving. He had been in the very lair of the tiger and emerged not only unscathed but with double rations for the apes. But it had been a most shattering experience. He felt badly in need of a Guinness and lime.

Brigadier Gaskell was speaking to the tall, gangling, odd-looking Major who sat at his desk. Major Clyde, one of the top-level hush-hush boys who had joined Major McPherson, had arrived on the Rock from London not long before.

"I was wondering whether you might have heard anything connected with this." The Brigadier slid across the signal from the Secretary of State.

They were alone. Major Quennel, having been excused upon the arrival of Major Clyde, was having to content himself with straining his ears to the murmur of voices which came through the thin partition dividing the Brigadier's office from his own. The Brigadier was being cagey and tentative. For the interview Major Clyde had suppressed his natural flamboyance and was playing the respectful officer in the presence of a powerful superior.

There was no indication whatever that Major Clyde, presenting

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his credentials in the shape of a bottle of whisky, had already made himself known to Tim, Felicity, and Gunner Lovejoy, and formed his plan of campaign for Tim's reinstatement accordingly.

And now Major Clyde took the telegram from the Brigadier and gave a creditable performance of interest and surprise at reading it, since he had been familiar with the contents for some time, indeed had been responsible for some of the wording in which the wishes of the P.M. had finally been couched. " A great man," the Major murmured when he had finished.

" Eh? " said the Brigadier.

" Nothing gets past him."

" Then you think it is serious? "

" Very."

And in just such a simple and subtle manner, without even having really said anything, the Major established his ascendancy, and himself as someone in the know on the subject. By means of silence and respectful attention and all the things he didn't say, Major Clyde had succeeded almost in evoking an image of himself as the personal representative of the Prime Minister in the mind of the Brigadier.

" Quite frankly," Gaskell said, " I'm worried. It's got to be answered; something's got to be done. I have had the clots in who are supposed to be looking after the beasts. Completely clueless. All they kept saying was that it wasn't their can."

Major Clyde nodded and merely remarked, " Not very helpful, sir," and waited.

"Look here," said the Brigadier suddenly, "there's a chap here on the Rock who knows a lot about these stinkers—I mean he seems to have made himself fairly knowledgeable on the subject."

The Major waited, his eyes downcast as though re-studying the message.

" Fellow named Bailey. Captain Bailey. Used to be OIC Apes. Gave him the sack. He irritated me with his seeping monkeys and his demands for them. Got on my nerves. Always coming in here laying bumph on my desk. Wanting cages built! Concrete shelters! Concrete flooring! "

Major Clyde raised his eyes from the paper and the Brigadier searched them for any hint of reaction or knowledge of whom he was speaking, but they appeared to be blank and at the same time filling up with soothing sympathy for the Brigadier's dilemma.

" And you'd like him to help you now," the Major murmured quite impersonally and half to himself.

" Impossible," said the Brigadier. " Couldn't look the fellow in the eye. Humiliated him."

The Major continued to act smoothly and without precipitation. Instead of replying immediately, he picked up the message from the Secretary of State and pretended to read it again. " Sir," he said, " I don't know how much aware you are of it, but this is a very powerful signal. The dynamite is contained in the phrase 'every effort should be made.'

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"For instance," he continued, "what is it you are most in need of at the moment?"

All of the Brigadier's troubles, the difficulties that beset every commanding officer in a war when there is never enough of anything and everything to meet his needs, came flooding back upon the Brigadier and he replied savagely. "Cement! A bloody great shipload of it for concrete. The engineers are hollowing out this Rock and they need concrete, concrete, concrete. We're getting it in driblets, confounded parsimonious spoonfuls—"

Major Clyde flicked the cable with a fingernail. "There you are, sir," he said quietly. "All you require."

Gaskell was still groping for the penny; he looked his query in the direction of the Major.

"Major Bailey will be requesting concrete for the shelters he'd be building for the apes—" Clyde said.

The penny made a fine brazen clangour within the Brigadier's skull as it finally dropped. "By God," he exclaimed. "You mean—?"

"Oh yes," replied the Major simply. "Quite! We'll see that there's enough for everyone."

It was the turn of the Brigadier to pick up the signal, and the look he bestowed upon it was now a fond one. By some alchemy it had been transformed from his enemy to his friend. And the five words "every effort should be made" now stood out from the pages as though they had been written in raised and burnished gold. "You mean *promote* young Bailey and no trouble?"

"Exactly, sir. When the P.M. says he wants every effort made—no one's going to stop to ask questions."

"Gad," said Gaskell again, glancing once more at the treasure between his fingers; then, "I say, look here, Major. *Do you mean reappoint Bailey?*"

"Yes, sir."

"You chaps know a lot more about this kind of thing than I do."

"If I can be of any help, sir."

"Well, I thought perhaps if I turned the whole business over to you to look after—"

"If you wanted me to, sir."

"Splendid," said the Brigadier, and he scribbled upon the sheet and handed it to the Major. "Wish they'd sent out a few more officers like yourself." He rose and proffered his hand which the Major shook warmly and departed. Gaskell felt as though the entire weight of the Rock had been lifted from his shoulders.

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★ ***Hilarious new chapters from Scruffy by Paul Gallico in next month's Argosy on sale April 10***

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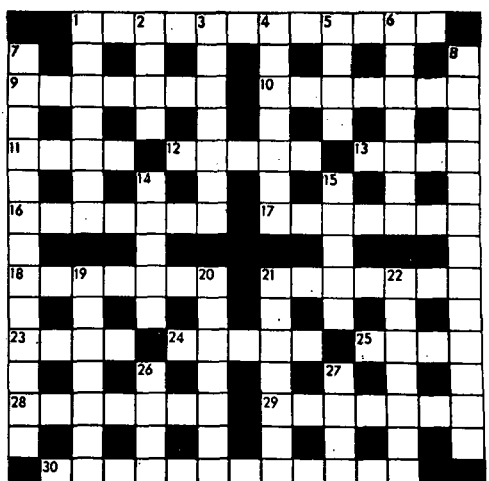
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution on page 91



ACROSS

1 Sound of sound (12).

9 Gift dispatched earlier (7).

10 Stops, and sleeps finally (7).

11 Intimate when dear as well (4).

12 Left with yolk on their lips—ungainly (5).

13 Usually candied for cakes (4).

16 Asinine examples of 1 across (7).

17 Walks over an acquired relation ? (7).

18 They have children, these butterfliers ! (7).

21 Canal boat ! (7).

23 Flag girl (4).

24 Fared well—at the bus queue ? (3, 2).

25 Porch is in this to a T (4).

28 Always followed by nor (7).

29 Brown sailor one notes on a trumpet (7).

30 Shocking colour which is currently fashionable (8, 4).

DOWN

1 Perform on broken rope before stirring tea (7).

2 Poems are at the end of the ends of the earth (4).

3 She often listens to the bishop's joke ! (7).

4 Fruit sold in Covent Garden — in Drury Lane in fact (7).

5 Put in by interfering busybodies (4).

6 Spinets broken and trodden underfoot! (7).

7 Amateur or pro—these are the tops (4, 9).

8 Dan stabs a bail, smashed without seeing (2, 5, 2, 1, 3).

14 Old salt turns back in two directions for taxes (5).

15 Is she a copperknob? (5).

19 Test about six is unimportant (7).

20 Cleanser (7).

21 Muddled costing is mystic (7).

22 Our gate smashed for an insult (7).

26 Elegant—sounds quite a bird (4).

27 Broken nail is indigo (4).

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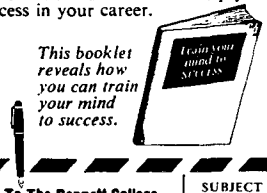

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